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Alphabet of Reality Series

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIVINE FORMS



SRI GANESHA

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

Srikant

I looked at the book from the viewpoint of Hindu parents in US who face the challenge of teaching their children about their faith. School and college textbooks and reference material routinely feed misinformation about Hinduism. For these parents, *Integral Books* has undertaken a very much needed and timely endeavor indeed.

The concise 144 page book on Sri Ganesha explains in a comprehensive but logical, and rational way, the hidden meanings and concepts behind the birth and the form of Sri Ganesha. It's an admirable treatise full of vast amount of pertinent information extracted from various Hindu scriptures and faithfully translated and explained with subtle nuances. Apropos, this information is presented in the larger context of theory, philosophy, and universal tenets of Hinduism, so it all makes a complete sense together - or as the young people would say, it all hangs together.

- Dr. Ved Chaudhary, HICAD, U.S.A. (from review)

Alphabet of Reality - Significance of Divine Forms

Not only foreigners but also many Indians are often puzzled about several Gods mentioned in Hinduism. After having explained the significance of *Sri Ganesha* and His form, the author has written all about the Sun God.... Several facts provided in the book, in simple manner after intense research makes it authoritative and a work of permanent interest.

- 'The Hindu' (from review)

The author has dealt with the significance of these divine forms from the scientific, historical and upaasana points of view. Parents and teachers will find these books extremely useful in explaining the youth the scientific basis of the worship of Brahman in various forms.

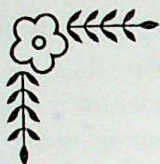
'Yuva Bharati' (from review)
Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

"Like the gentle dew that
falls unseen and unheard,
yet brings into blossom the
fairest of roses, has been
the contribution of India
to the thought of the world."

- Swami Vivekananda

"All knowledge begins and
ends with wonder; but the
first wonder is the child of
ignorance; the second wonder
is the parent of adoration."

- Coleridge



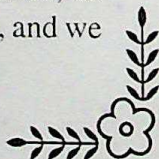
Our Mission

Modern biologists have to a great extent traced the mechanical laws of evolution whereas India's sages through their deeper search discovered the laws of Universal Rhythm - *Sanaathana Dharma* - the spiritual thrust inherent in the lifestream prompting it to ever greater realms of unfoldment.

It is the awareness of the spiritual impetus beyond mechanism that helped India renew herself every age - a capacity so well highlighted in the words of Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose : "*By a continuous living tradition of rejuvenescence this land has readjusted itself through unnumbered transformations.*"

This vision of progress through constant inner renewal and expansion guided by the wisdom of a heritage that boldly explored into the very essence of life, has equipped India to make significant contributions for the further evolution of man.

Presentation and promotion of the life-transforming values discovered by India's explorers of Truth, with a modern orientation suited to our times, is a need of these days of turbulence, to strengthen human consciousness and spirit, and we are dedicated to this mission.



alphabet of Reality Series

SRI GANESHA

SRIKANT



INTEGRAL BOOKS

Anandashram. P.O.

Kanhangad, Kerala-671 531, India

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SRI GANESHA

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Author

Srikant

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4. A Biological Introduction to the Bhagavad-gita
5. Sabarimala: Its Timeless Message

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Contents

Foreword by Swami Mridananda	6
Introduction	9
The Form and Its Significance	13
Meaningful Legends	43
Devotional Worship	63
A Glimpse into History	90
Temples of Sri Ganesha	106
Ganesha Worship Abroad	112
Sri Ganesha <i>Sthothra-s</i>	116
A New Hypothesis	126
'The Milk Miracle' - A Reassessment	131
A 'Freudian' Misinterpretation and Denigration of a Profound Divine Theme	138



Foreword

FAITH in a Supreme Power gives relief and solace to man's worldly afflictions. It brings him the strength and reassurance of communion with the Reality behind the transcendental phenomenal world.

Man is in constant pursuit of happiness. Experience makes him realise that he cannot derive abiding happiness from the evanescent objects of the world. That which gives him much pleasure today often turns out to be a great source of suffering tomorrow. The thoughtful inquirers of India recognised that the real source of happiness is their own consciousness, not their senses, body or the objects of the world. This made them meditate upon the nature of consciousness which led them to the experience of a blissful eternal Reality which is the source of their consciousness and of the phenomenal world.

Human phenomenon has an inborn urge to evolve from the biological to the psycho-social and spiritual dimensions. Every pursuit of happiness is in a way an expression of this urge, although many lose sight of the harmonious natural path, go awry and suffer. Others cultivate the moral and spiritual values of life, the real way of human evolution, experiencing an increasing sense of freedom and happiness. And a few of them even attain the bliss of *Supreme* Wisdom.

Man exists in a world of forms and qualities, which like the colours latent in the transparent light, have their source in *Supreme* Reality. By nature the human mind is conditioned by these forms and qualities. To draw strength and wisdom from the Source, mind has to be trained and refined so that it becomes a fit receptacle to contain and express the divine glory. As a practical aid for this communion, the sages conceived suitable forms

that symbolise sublime spiritual principles. Worship of such divine forms invokes these principles and the forms function as powerful conduits of divine grace and guidance.

The earliest literary works of mankind, the Veda-s contain invocations to various Gods and Goddesses. In the *karma kaanda*, which deals with the practice of rituals, etc., of the Veda-s, there are elaborate descriptions of the modes of worship and the *manthra*-s to invoke the spiritual powers represented by them. It was in the age of the Upanishad-s, the unique philosophical treatises on sublime spiritual truths, special efforts were made to explain the inner significance of the Vedic concepts. In them the Rishi-s declared that it is the same Reality that people choose to call by different names - *ekam sad, vipraa bahudhaa vadanthi*. They called the supreme Truth as Brahman. They approved the worship of Reality in different forms, as the worship would help to refine the mind and equip it to be receptive and comprehend the supreme Truth. They, however, warned against any fanatical sticking to the form aspect and advise to use them intelligently as a stepping stone to Reality realising the fact that the Reality symbolised by the form transcends all forms.

While the Upanishad-s contain sublime philosophical discussions on the Absolute, the Puraana-s are replete with symbolic stories of perennial interest to the legend-loving human mind, and in these the great Rishi-s embodied high philosophical and spiritual principles. These legends served to inculcate higher values in society. Several forms of deities were conceived by human insight and imagination; but for an earnest seeker they will gradually reveal their secrets, for which the keys can be found often in the same texts. Likewise, the forms of deities are pregnant with profound meaning. Those who explore their significance will find that their several heads and hands, the various weapons, the ornaments, the garments and even their colours signify lofty spiritual principles. As the

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principles relating to the eternal Source of this wonderful universe, the divine forms of Puraanic origin throb with the vision and power of that wisdom.

I am glad this series of books, *Alphabet of Reality*, are intended to explore the language of divine forms beginning with the worship of Sri Ganesha, known as Sri Vigneshwara, who wards off all obstacles. The effort I hope will gladden all those who believe in *Sanaathana Dharma*, the Universal Rhythm leading to human refinement and perfection.

The form of Sri Ganesha differs from other Godly forms. The face of an elephant having one tusk, a human body with a big pot-belly, four hands, the body entwined by a serpent and a rat as the mount of the huge figure! He is worshipped both for material prosperity and spiritual illumination. Sri Ganesha is the Presiding Deity of the divine energy in man, *Kundalini*, which is capable of elevating human consciousness to its supreme state.

In the hymns on Sri Ganesha, He is extolled as the very symbol of the supreme Truth that transcends all qualities and forms. His form symbolises both the way and the goal of spiritual pursuit. This book will be thought-provoking even to the modern scientist for its rational approach to a great theme. I hope that the seekers of spiritual wisdom will find this a useful compendium. May Lord Ganesha's Grace illumine our path for harmonious life and spiritual fulfilment.

Swami Mridananda

President, Sri Ramakrishna Math
Puranattukara
Thrissur, Kerala

5 October 1962

Introduction

INDIA'S heritage holds profound spiritual truths. Those who have the mind to enquire come by consoling facts about life in her philosophical texts. These facts give man a meaningful vision about himself and his destiny.

Knowledge unfolds its greater fields as human quest advances. If the pursuit is honest, free, unbiased and with the humble passion of a mountaineer who yearns to see more expansive vistas at every climbing step, the realms of awareness and beauty expand, enriching the texture of life. The quest refines, strengthens and expands the human personality.

Modern scientific enquiry began solely on a materialistic basis. From its early beginnings in the sixteenth century, as science advances to its stupendous discoveries in the closing phase of the twentieth century, we see its worldview turning more philosophical, with an Einstein or Carl Jung tending to speak like a Yaajnavalkya or Pathanjali of ancient India.

There are people who believe that the forms of Gods and Goddesses are meaningless figments of imagination of primitive ages. It is difficult to judge which age is more primitive in cultural terms - the age of the Rig Vedic Rishi-s, who could conceive such high human ideals: *"Let the world live in harmony and peace"*; *"Let noble thoughts come to us from every side"*, or our age of flourishing trade in weapons of mass annihilation! When false signals from computers hold the potential to convert mankind into piles of ash any moment, everyone in our times has to contemplate on what O. Nash has said: "There has been a lot of progress during my lifetime. But I am afraid it's heading in the wrong direction."

In different phases of human history, in this ancient land lived intellectual prodigies, who boldly explored into the mysteries of life and gained the spiritual wisdom, which they

passed on to posterity by means of stories, diagrams and forms, enabling the knowledge to survive the long passage of time.

The philosophical trends of modern science, which tend to converge towards the insights of the seers, equip the present-day intellect to probe deeper into ancient wisdom for its rediscovery in modern terms, as would help man to transform the present period of darkness and uncertainty into that of light and reassurance.

The traditional sciences and the philosophical concepts of India are pregnant with profound vistas of knowledge about the human phenomenon and Nature. For example, the direct experiences of thousands keep up the relevance of astrology alive, even in our highly technological age, though it eludes a convincing scientific explanation. This shows the existing gap between ancient insights and modern scientific perspective. It points out that the ancient explorers had wrested out some keys from Nature to open some of the mystery boxes of human life and Nature. The wondrous genetic code that determines the structural details of a living being was an unsuspected biological secret during Darwin's time. Yet, it was there subtly directing the destiny of life. Nature still keeps away many of her profound secrets from the observation of the scientific eye and it seems that the ancient Rishi-s had a breakthrough access to many subtle realities, as they were earnest seekers, not mere technologists using their brains for material gains.

Man's enquiry about himself and about his relation with Nature begins even from lower psychological levels. A leap from a lower to a superior level often needs the help of a spring-board. The concept of deities, the facets of Brahman, the supreme Reality, is such an aid for inner exploration. There is no fundamental distinction in the inner significance of various deities despite the external variations in names and forms. They are all extolled in essence as Brahman. Forms merge into the

principles they signify and into the wisdom they convey.

Any fanatical concept of a formless one-God partial to a group of people or religion is alien to Indian philosophy, which recognises the infinite diversity as the expression of the One Reality. It inspires to see the divine Essence in diversity. It gives one the freedom of choice to hitch on any desirable form or forms or a formless concept, that symbolise that Essence so as to merge in communion with the Reality and realise the fact that the seeker and the worshipful deity are essentially the same blissful Brahman, the transcendental Source of all diversity beyond the transitory phenomena of life and death.

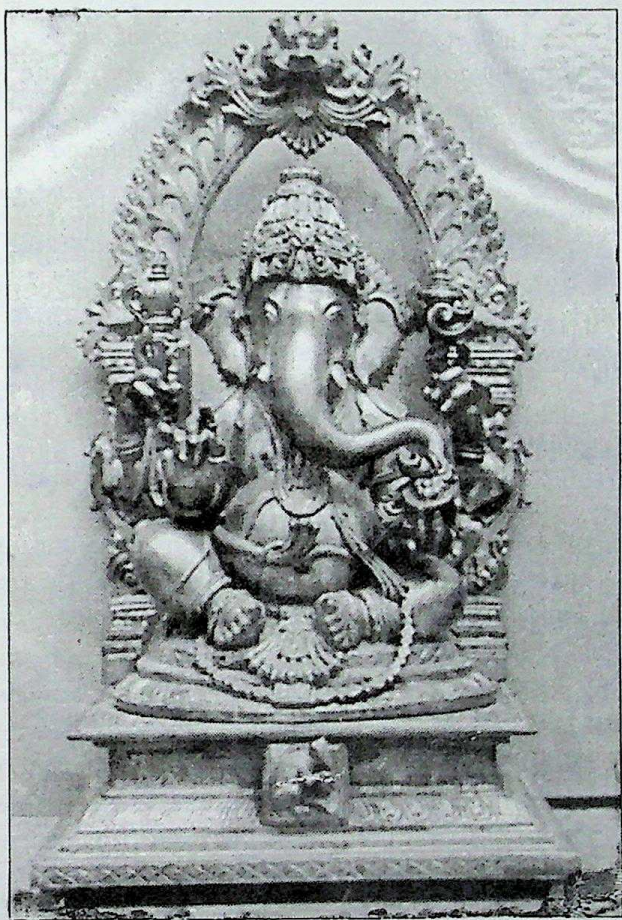
In the Indian philosophical context God is not just a formless superman, who is partial to those who avow faith in some particular religion. He is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* - Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. He is unconditioned freedom. If He has no freedom to assume forms, He is not Almighty. The universe of innumerable forms is an expression of God's freedom to take forms. The universe is not a creation of God. It is the omnipresent He Himself. Man is not a condemned slave of God, by praising whom the slave gets manifold material gifts. Through a discipline of inner evolution, man can expand his consciousness and transcend his biological limitations and realise the freedom and glory of God. Everything is God only - *eeshaa-vaasya-midam sarvam*. There is no anti-God. It is the distorted conditioned ego, not in harmony with the blissful Reality, that turns itself into a demoniac *Asura* or Satan. When the fallen ego realises its inner Essence, it regains its divinity. Submission of man's conditioned ego to his own blissful and powerful inner dimensions is the means to raise himself to a superior cultural status, to a superior civilization. The forms of deities are meaningful symbols of this scope of human transcendence. They signify the freedom of choice in man's spiritual quest and evolution.

The meaningful forms were manifested in the super-

conscious state of seers representing the divine aspects and power aspects of Reality. Mystic diagrams and forms of deities are letters of a unique language of divine symbolism. This series of books, *Alphabet of Reality*, begins with the form of Sri Ganesha, the God of auspiciousness and remover of obstacles, without propitiating whom no ritual or ceremony is performed in the Hindu way of life.

The Ganesha concept is potent with many shades of sublime meaning. Here we are mainly examining the theme in its aspects as the guiding light in the evolutionary unfoldment of human consciousness.

In this series an attempt is being made to probe into the deeper meaning of divine forms and their spiritual significance. The effort is neither to confine the concepts within an intellectual frame, nor to explain the ancient insights, limiting them in the bounds of the present-day scientific knowledge, but to use the emerging philosophical trends of modern thought as pointers to the transcendental dimensions of existence discovered by India's ancient seers. This approach is rather new. It may stimulate thought for further enquiry. With this attitude, the following study is placed before readers.



THE FORM

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

The Form and Its Significance

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं
निरानन्दमानन्दमद्वैतपूर्णम्
परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम

*Ajam nirvikalpam niraakaaramekam
Niraanandam aanandam advaitha-poornnam
Param nirgunam nirvishesham nireeham
Parabrahma-roopam Ganesham bhajema.*

“We worship Thee, the unborn, the absolute and the formless, beyond bliss and bliss itself, the indivisible and the infinite, the Supreme without attributes, unconditioned and desireless, the very form of the transcendental Reality, Brahman.” - *Sri Ganeshasthavam*.

That infinite, formless Reality invoked in the above hymn is represented here by a form with an elephant's face and human body. And His mount is a rat.

Symbol is the fundamental unit of human thought. It is the basic means of communication of primitive man as well as a modern scientist. India's ancient explorers of Truth evolved suitable symbols to explain the different facets of Reality, the Spirit behind the changing phenomena of the universe and man's relation with it. They devised a language of symbolic forms to help us read the book of the Spirit and enter into communion with the omnipotent Reality, Brahman.

For transliterating some of the proper names and Sanskrit words the pattern adopted is as follows : aa as in father; i as in sit; ee as in see; u as in put; oo as in too; o as in got; e as in may; the Visargah (:) sign is indicated by h.

It is said in *Sri Ramapoornavataapaneeya Upanishad*:

उपासकानां कार्याथे ब्रह्मणे रूपकल्पना

“Brahman, the Supreme Truth, is conceived in forms to aid the spiritual seekers.”

India's broad approach to spiritual quest allows the choice of an appropriate discipline that suits the aptitude of the seeker.

Accordingly, one can approach the Supreme in its *nirguna* (attributeless) and *niraakaara* (formless) aspects or in its *saguna* (with attributes) and *saakaara* (with forms) aspects. While those who are temperamentally inclined to the path of knowledge (*jnaana-maarga*) would prefer to know Reality in its aspect as the formless Absolute, the devotionally oriented, who are the majority, would naturally like to adore the Divine with attributes and forms and enjoy the sweet relationship of a personal communion, eventually realising the fact that the seeker and the Supreme Truth are essentially One.

A deity's form exceeds in many respects the ordinary human form, symbolising the divine potentials in man, attainable through inner expansion. The forms personify philosophical and spiritual principles. When the mind is directed to a divine form, the sublime powers of Brahman, represented by that form and latent in human consciousness, are invoked facilitating a communion with man's greater Self, which gives strength, freedom and meaning to life.

The concept of a divine form is an aid for the conditioned ego of man to submit itself to the unconditioned Reality within. Through the active spiritual principles symbolized by a Deity, the transcendental Truth gradually equips the human mind to shed its limitations and realize that one is essentially the unborn, infinite Supreme Conscious Reality.

A Practical Discipline

Worship of divine forms is part of a practical science of spirituality evolved by India's exploring seers, the Rishi-s. They ask us not to cling blindly to forms but to use them intelligently as a threshold to the divine Reality. The human mind is normally conditioned from birth to death by names and forms. The forms that suggest sublime principles are wisely used to guide the mind for a breakthrough beyond names and forms to the spiritual dimensions, which are their very cause. Here, India's spiritual approach adopts the practical method of teaching a language. At first the student's attention is invited to the form of letters, and then to the meaning of words. Eventually the mind expands to comprehend even the abstract ideas expressed by the language.

In the symbolic language of divine forms evolved by the Rishi-s to unravel the sublime facets of Reality, Sri Ganesha forms the first letter. Ganapathi, Vigneshwara and Vinaayaka are other popular appellations of Sri Ganesha.

When one explores into the symbolism of the Divine form of Sri Ganesha, one realizes that He represents the spiritual power that prompts consciousness locked in earth to express its greater dimensions through living beings and that equips man to transcend the obstacles in his material and spiritual dimensions till he evolves to his unconditioned Supreme Reality.

This spiritual power is evoked by concentrating the mind on the form of Sri Ganesha, and an awareness of the significance helps the effort

Universal Appeal

Archaeologists find that a deity with an elephant-man combination had a universal appeal and was worshipped in many parts of the world, in India, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Persia, Nepal, Tibet, China, Turkestan, Mongolia, Japan and possibly even in Bulgaria, Mexico and Peru, indicating a world-wide ramification

of the Ganesha concept.

Both the Vaishnava and Saiva sects among Hindus, the Buddhists as well as Jains invoke Sri Ganesha in the beginning of all undertakings mundane or spiritual, as he is Vigneshwara, the divine power that removes impediments, inertia and obstacles. According to a tradition of the Mahaayaana Buddhists, the Buddha himself had advised a highly mystical *manthra*, *Ganapathi Hridayam* to his closest disciple, Ananda.

The form of Sri Ganesha symbolises a significant evolutionary theme related to the emergence of the universe and evolution of life. It will help us better understand the theme if we first examine briefly the ancient concepts about the origin of the universe and then some of the new trends in modern biology.

Evolution of the Universe

The question 'is there a cause behind the perpetually changing drama of the universe and life,' that agitated the ancient thinkers of India, inspired them to embark upon an adventurous exploration on the nature of human consciousness. Their intensive meditative probe led them to the stupendous experience of a causeless Cause, which is the Source of all that is. They defined that supreme Reality as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*--Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

They said that the universe and life are the emergents from that Reality - Brahman. The basic fabric is *Shakthi*, the power latent in Brahman. *Shakthi* assumes an active state first as a primeval vibration represented by ॐ (Om) known as *Pranavam* or *Sabda Brahman*. From this stage arises an unmanifest and unconditioned field of many a subtle vibration with infinite creative potentials. This subtlest creative field is known as *Moola Prakrithi*, the Primeval Nature. The manifested Nature conditioned by time and space is one expression of the unfathomable creative potential of *Moola Prakrithi*, which is therefore called, *Mahaa Maaya*, (the supreme, immeasurable, creative infinitude) or the *Brahmaanda* (the egg of Brahman) or *Hiranya Garbha* (the

golden womb pregnant with everything). The essence of *Moola Prakrithi* is Brahman and therefore all that emerges from it are also basically that Essence which is : Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

Spinoza, the Western philosopher, who heralded a transition from the classic religious view to a scientific one, amplifies this *Advaitik* vision of the ancient Rishi-s, in the following lines: *“Nature consists of infinite attributes. To its essence pertains existence so that outside it there is no essence or existence. It thus coincides exactly with the essence of God.”*

The Concept of Praana

The seers said that the creative potential of *Moola Prakrithi* is first expressed as a form of energy called *Praana*. *Praana* shows the characteristics of consciousness. Modern physics is yet to discover it; however, there is a growing awareness of its possibility among the scientists, who closely study the evidences obtained today from a large number of experiments conducted in extrasensory perceptions. Werner Heisenburg, one of the founders of modern nuclear physics, does not rule out the existence of other kinds or forms of energy, “which we cannot match with the mathematical structure of atomic physics.” *Praana*, according to the ancient seers, is the basic energy in the background of all that exists, whether it is physical energy, matter or living beings. When Max Planck, who revolutionised modern physics with his quantum theory, talks about the force of a conscious intelligent spirit, “which sets the atomic particles in oscillation and concentrates them into minute solar systems of the atom,” he is underlining the concept of *Praana*, of the ancient Rishi-s.

The Two-fold Expression of Praana

From the energy aspect of *Praana* emerges the material universe, and its conscious aspect locked in matter finds expression in living beings. (In Vedanta there is a subtle science of *three guna-s*, which are three special aspects of energy, responsible for

phenomenal expression.) Through the process of organic evolution the factor of consciousness becomes more expressive. In man it reaches the stage of regaining the glory and freedom of its transcendental divine essence. There is a revealing episode related to this in the *Bhagavatha Puraana*. God created many beings such as fish, birds and animals. Yet, He could not get a sense of fulfillment. At last when He created man, He felt very happy, because he could evolve one closer to Him, the one who has the faculty to attain Him. Of course, this underlines the theory of evolution.

The origin of *Moola Prakrithi* from the primeval vibration Om, the emergence of the *Praana* energy from the *Moola Prakrithi*, *Praana's* manifestation as the material world and the living beings and the phenomenon's potential of rediscovering its divine Essence through man - all this knowledge is presented by the Rishi-s in the wisdom of Vedanta and is poetically mentioned as the grand play, the *leela*, of Reality.

A New Biological Vision

It is through the evolutionary refinement of the nervous system, consciousness finds increasing expression in living beings. Although the orthodox biologists still stick to their belief that consciousness is a chance-product of chemical action and reaction, there is now considerable rethinking. The following statement of Julian Huxley, the eminent biologist and thinker, who gave a new orientation to Darwinism, reflects a modern biological leaning towards the ancient concept of *Praana*. He writes in his essay *Philosophy in a World at War*, that apart from lightning, the only electrical phenomena known before the end of eighteenth century were the electric shocks produced by the electric eel, the electric ray and one or two other kinds of fish. He points out that as physiology progressed, it understood the role of electric currents in all the vital activities of the body, although the electrical charges are extremely minute and can be detected only by the most refined instruments. And he reminds us of the fact that when we get down to the ultimate units of matter,

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such as electrons, their electrical properties seem to be the most essential aspect of matter itself.

“One may suggest”, Julian Huxley states, “the same sort of thing has happened with mind. All the activities of the world-stuff are accompanied by mental as well as by material happenings; in most cases, however, the mental happenings are at such a low level of intensity that we cannot detect them; we may perhaps call them ‘psychoid’ happenings, to emphasise their difference in intensity and quality from our own psychical or mental activities. In those organs that we call brains, however, the psychoid activities are, in some way, made to reinforce each other until, as is clearly the case in higher animals, they reach a high level of intensity and they are the dominant and specific function of the brain of man. Until we learn to detect psychoid activities of low intensity, as we have learned to do with electrical happenings, we cannot prove this. But already it has become the simplest hypothesis that will fit the facts of developmental and evolutionary continuity.” **This is a pointer to the possibility that the present gap between the scientist’s concept of ‘blind’ energy and the Rishi’s knowledge of the intelligence-laden energy *Praana* may lessen as science makes further advance.**

The Cerebro-Spinal System-Basis of Man’s Further Evolution

We should specially note the fact that centuries before modern scientists began to understand the functions of the various physiological systems in the human body, the Rishi-s gave prime importance to the cerebro-spinal system and its sublime energy current as the basic field for man’s further evolution. Only in recent times modern physiology became aware of the electrical nature of transmission of messages through the nervous system, and still this knowledge is confined to the mechanistic stages of chemical reactions, etc. Biology is yet to grasp the involvement of intelligence in the hormonal and nervous functions that maintain the body. The Rishis discovered the subtle role of the intelligence-

laden *Praana* energy from the fertilisation of an egg to the death of a being. When modern science can discover this fact, it may bring in a creative revolution in human attitudes.

Man stands at an evolutionary stage where consciousness has reached a high level of intensity. He can further reinforce his consciousness by creatively intensifying it and achieve anything he wants. If we negatively apply our consciousness and its energy to invent weapons, we shall certainly make the most furious weapons to annihilate ourselves, as the demon Bhasmaasura of Puraanic lore, a classic epitomization of the suicidal negativity in man, did to himself. Bhasmaasura earnestly desired to obtain a boon from Lord Shiva to reduce people into ashes by a mere touch on their head by his hand. He did intense penance for the purpose. He certainly realised his desire, but annihilated himself by unwittingly placing his hand on his own head! Bhasmaasura means, the Ash Demon. How well the farsighted ancient seers have thus personified the senseless trend in man which can turn him into a heap of ash - a trend very much evident in our age of nuclear weapons!

But if we desire to have the greater freedom of a superior civilization of evolved human being, that also we shall certainly achieve, as man is free to obtain whatever he wants. If his desire is negative, he suffers, and if positive, he expands to the greater dimensions of his being.

The ancient seers discovered the currents of sublime energy and its dynamic centres along the cerebro-spinal system and its nervous ramifications, a system, which resembles very much the inverted banyan tree mentioned in the Bhagavad-Gita with roots up and thousands of branches spreading below. Their knowledge is the basis of such traditional sciences as acupuncture, *Marma Vidyā*, etc., which baffle modern scientists.

They discovered six major energy centres along the spinal chord and their activation can further intensify and reinforce

consciousness and raise it to its higher dimensions. Significantly these centres are known as the six *chakra-s*, the wheels of power that can reinforce and expand consciousness to its higher states. They are also known as the *padma-s* - lotuses - signifying unfoldment and expansion. They are : the *Moolaadhaara*, at the very base of the spine, *Swaadhistaana* at the level of the genital region, *Manipooraka*, near the navel, *Anaahatha*, near the heart, *Vishudhi*, at the throat, and *Aajna*, between the eye-brows. The sages revealed that the *Moolaadhaara*, at the base of the spine, is a powerful centre of an evolutionary energy known as *Kundalini*. The name signifies that the energy normally remains in a potential state. When *Kundalini* gets activated in a creative direction, the human mind evolves achieving the glory and freedom of the superior dimensions of consciousness. This is often accompanied by new experiences and expression of new faculties.

Sri Ganesha - Presiding Deity of Moolaadhaara

Each of these six centres beginning with *Moolaadhaara*, has a Presiding Deity, who represents the special divine characteristic of the centre. The Presiding Deity of *Moolaadhaara* is Sri Ganesha, who signifies the energising divine power of *Kundalini*. Sri Ganesha's form has a message in this context, which shows the way of activating this sublime power.

There are two ways for man to conduct himself - either to direct his inner energies creatively and evolve or to dissipate them and degenerate. He has the freedom for both.

Man often unintelligently misuses this great evolutionary energy, causing harm to society and bringing havoc on himself, as the demon Bhasmaasura did. In every extraordinary physical feat or manifestation of great intellectual acumen, knowingly or unknowingly there is an involvement of this supra-physical energy. In such religious rites as fire-walking and in several miraculous acts, *Kundalini* power has a significant role. This power with unfathomable potentials is misused in such evil designs as black magic and in aberrant intellectual pursuits as the invention of lethal

weapons, etc. On the other hand, it can be wisely directed to revitalise the body and mind and to outgrow their limitations and to evolve to a superior state of being. The meaningful figure of Sri Ganesha shows the way. We shall explore how Sri Ganesha's form significantly represents the threshold of man's spiritual evolution and its fulfillment.

Some Modern Experiments

Before examining the significance of the form let us have a brief view of some new trends in modern biological investigations. This account may first appear as a deviation from our subject, yet it will help our study of the deep facts involved in Sri Ganesha's form, bringing the ancient insight in a refreshing harmony with the new vistas of modern biological thought.

A common factor in Indian philosophy and modern science is their concept of an evolutionary unfoldment of the universe and the phenomenon of life. Therefore, Indian philosophy is broad enough to include in its range Darwin's views of organic evolution, although it transcends his mechanistic concepts, declaring that in the background of life's development are spiritual values of a directional nature.

Survival of the Fittest vs. Survival of the Helpless

According to Darwin's views of evolution, the diverse species originated as a result of blind physical struggle, aided by natural selection and complexity of chances.

Darwin emphasises the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest as the mechanical factors that prompted evolution of life. But he overlooks a basic value exhibited by the phenomenon of life, which is very relevant in its continuity. There is a helpless phase in life - infancy. This phase is survived by beings not through struggle, but with the help of an inborn value expressed in life. This value - co-operation - contradicts struggle and is expressed through another universal value, motherly love. Against Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest, this situation

can be termed *survival of the helpless*. Had this value of co-operation not expressed in the innumerable manifestations of life, there could not have been a continuity in existence at all. This element of co-operation is more basic than the struggle for existence. Nature's provision of food begins even at the stage of the egg. This thoughtful provision for the developing embryo and later the motherly care for the helpless young are the basic necessities for survival and for the emergence of higher species through evolution. Here we see the presence of a directional energy that supports life.

DHARMA - the Directional Rhythm

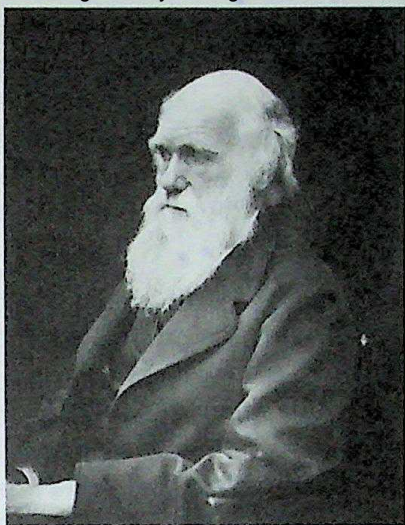
Here we get the clues to the presence and action of a Directional Rhythm in the universe, which the great Rishi-s called Sanaathana Dharma, the eternal directive principle of harmony that maintains the galaxies and the solar system and expresses as values in the world of living beings, which man must consciously imbibe for his evolution and realization of his greater possibilities.

Darwin's mind was too immersed in mechanistic views to appreciate the subtle facts beyond mechanism.

Charles Darwin's (1809 - 1882) concept of organic evolution had a liberating influence on the human mind. It made people realise the self-evolving potency of Nature. This concept is no way in conflict with India's spiritual vision. It is understandable that the great scientist very much immersed in the physical mechanism of evolution could not grasp the greater principles behind the self-evolving faculty of Nature, as India's Rishi-s could. However, awareness is dawning among the modern scientists of the deeper principles in life as is evident in the following words of Sherrington, an eminent physiologist: "It is as if an immanent Principle inspired each cell with the knowledge for carrying out a design."

Darwin, in his later years, lamented his loss of capacity

to enjoy poetry particularly Shakespeare and many other poets like Milton, Byron, Wordsworth and Shelley, of whom he was an ardent lover in his younger days. "I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me," he wrote. He regarded this as a personal loss and said that he would cultivate such tastes every week if he had



to live over his life again. "My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of a large collection of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive."

On the otherhand, the Rishi-s, the mighty intellects who gave form to the Upanishad-s and Puraana-s, cultivated these very sensitive parts of the brain and penetrated into the deeper secrets of life, and, like Nachiketus, the seeker in the Katha Upanishad, they were filled with joy! The tragic state of the atrophy of the higher tastes, of which Darwin says, is what the modern world is facing in a defective system of education. The world will turn to be a hell of crime and senseless destruction if these sensitive areas of the brain are further allowed to be atrophied by today's grossly materialistic trends.

The stream of life in its progress from primitive beings to man had to face formidable obstacles at different stages. Yet, the life-energy that throbbed in the lowly amoeba evolved to be the man of thought, capable of surmounting every impediment. Although Darwin theorised that it was all the result of a blind physical struggle,

the new biological perception tends to ask a question which will inspire the modern mind to contemplate on the ancient vision of the directional values in life. Was there not a deeper and vital factor involved in the physical struggles of the lower forms of life in their evolution to the status of man? Such a question appears to arise in the following statement of the eminent biologist, J.B.S.Haldane :

“I imagine that associated with an evolving line may be some ‘emergent’ just as mind is associated with brain. Royce (1901) tried to give a concrete picture of such an emergent as a mind with a vast time-scale, and suggested that the intense feeling associated with reproduction was in that mind as well as our own. If there is an element of truth in such speculations, I question whether such an emergent should be regarded probably as mind like.... My suspicion of some unknown type of being associated with evolution is my tribute to its beauty, and to that inexhaustible queerness which is the main characteristic of the universe that has impressed itself on my mind during twentyfive years of my scientific work.”

Goal-oriented Behaviour of Living Cells

Thus, biology today starts suspecting the emergence of a mind-like guiding factor in the progress of evolution. **If we suppose that such a goal-seeking principle is involved in evolution that transformed animal into man, again urging man for a further breakthrough, in what way can we best express this principle? These questions are relevant in our inquiry into the meaning of the figure of Sri Ganesha.**

Modern biology is discovering many subtle factors involved in life, which it had not anticipated a century ago. It finds unending new vistas for exploration. The electron microscope reveals a world of wonder of the basic life units. The genes within the thread-like chromosomes are leading microbiology to the realm of magic! Their forms, arrangements, constitution, etc., open stupendous undreamt of vistas for biologists.

Biological perception is now in a struggle for a breakthrough. Some biologists, who are trying to evolve a more comprehensive vision of evolution are of the view that natural selection forms only a part of the mechanism of evolution and to explain evolution by that alone is like explaining the whole by a part. Like Haldane several biologists today suspect the involvement of a goal-seeking factor in the phenomenon.

The mind-like 'emergent' about which Haldane talks, appears to come closer to the concept of *Praana*, which may have a subtle role in the selection and arrangement of the basic chemical components necessary for the appearance of various life forms and their evolution. **The environment to which Darwin gave prime importance, may be playing only a catalytic role.**

A Directional Energy Functions

In organic evolution, the unicellular beings evolved into multicellular organisms with specialised organs. In between these two, there is a strange organism called the sponge. It is not actually a multicellular organism but an aggregation of unicellular protozoa. Although there is no apparent external material element that keeps them together, biologists have observed the presence of a *goal-oriented field* in this sea creature. If a live sponge is torn into pieces and passed through a sieve into a container of sea water, the separated cells will re-assemble themselves again to continue life as the sponge. **Here we see the spontaneous action of a goal-seeking force;** the goal is to keep them united. The union evidently involves a force of attraction. **The latent power in each cell, as if having a will, surmounts the state of being separated and reunites the cells. We see the fulfillment of a goal by a directional energy.**

Biology is also gradually becoming aware of the role of a directional urge in the formation of the organs in the body. Lyall Watson in his book *The Romeo Legend* has mentioned some revealing biological experiments that shed light on this.

In tissue culture experiments, scientists have cultivated isolated tissues from cells taken from rabbits, sheep, human beings, etc. If the cells are taken from an embryo, they will develop into appropriate structures as a muscle or a bone according to the part of the embryo from which the cells are taken.

L.Hayflick, a tissue culture expert at the Wistar Institute of Philadelphia, U.S.A., revealed from his experiments some special potentials of human embryonic cells.

He found that they could continue to multiply in isolation for fifty generations without their losing the power of organising themselves into definite shapes. After that the cells died as if they had lost some vital factor that directed their multiplication and ability to organise themselves into definite shapes. This limit varies from species to species and is known as the Hayflick limit.

When the culture nears this limit of exhaustion, the cells tend to lose their identity. The specialised cells belonging to different organs tend to lose their distinctiveness as if they have lost their purpose and destiny. They turn into goalless self-duplicating building blocks which can develop in any direction if we could give them some new direction. They lose the original directional factor although they retain their genetic blue print, feed, multiply and divide till they reach Hayflick limit and die.

It was found that if these goalless cells were put back into contact with the body of the original donor, they would regain their 'purpose' and 'goal', but if some mutation had taken place in the exhausted cells, they will multiply without direction resulting in cancerous growths. However, if no such alteration has taken place in the cells, they will multiply towards a particular goal according to the circumstances in which they are placed. It was found that when specialized cells from the eye region of a frog were implanted in its stomach, they followed the purpose of the new organs, transforming themselves and multiplying into a new gut lining.

Cancer - Cases of Spontaneous Healing

Articles by and on cancer patients often appear in newspapers relating how they got rid of the affliction by a combination of medication and meditation. The cells might have thus regained their goal-oriented capacity.

There was the classical example of a woman in Parappur in Kerala, who later became a well-known sage, Parappur Yogini. At about the age of twenty she was afflicted with lung cancer. Losing all interest in life, she immersed herself in the *japa*, the devotional repetition of the manthra: *Namah Shivaaya*, deciding to conclude her life with the sacred *manthra* on her lips. And one day it so happened that she vomited a large piece of clotted blood and she was completely cured. She lived for many years.

Biologists are becoming aware of the directional urge. They also suspect the role of a directional unfoldment in the origin of species through evolution, which may be realising its goal through the means of subtle and complex chemical actions, aided by environmental factors.

The eminent anthropologist Teilhard de Chardin's idea of a Noosphere points to the stupendous range of evolutionary possibilities of human consciousness beyond the present day biological vision.

Matter and Consciousness

Our ordinary concept about matter is that it is something inert, and some people believe that life was originated by a mere accident from this 'inert' matter. However, modern physics tells us of the incredible movements of the sub-atomic particles revealing that the atom basically is not inert but is a mysterious playground of energy. According to Indian philosophy, in the background of life energy and material energy there is *Praana*, the power that shows the characteristics of consciousness and energy, to which Max Planck, the nuclear physicist, seems to refer as the force of the Spirit "which sets the atomic particles in oscillation and

While the energy aspect of *Praana* is predominant in the material world, the consciousness aspect expresses through the living beings, reaching a high stage of intensity and manifestation in man. It must be the will of consciousness latent in matter that manifests as life, which by overcoming inertia and obstacles evolves to the stage of human consciousness.

Sri Ganesha : The Spiritual Will of Evolution

Sri Ganesha represents the power of the intelligent Spirit, acting in the unfoldment of the world of life from the world of matter. There is a legend in the *Matsya Puraana*, which tells that Sri Ganesha was born from the soil on the body of Goddess Paarvathi, the consort of Lord Shiva. (The significance of the legend is discussed in the next chapter).

Goddess Paarvathi is the *Shakthi* (Power) of Lord Shiva (Reality). From *Shakthi* originates *Moola Prakrithi*, the unmanifested Nature, with infinite potentials. *Moola Prakrithi* gives rise to the material universe, and from matter the living beings emerge with an inner urge to evolve and express the higher stages of consciousness and the higher potentials. (The origin of life from matter is indicated in the Bhagavad-gita as '*annaad-bhavanthi bhoothaani*' --beings evolve from food substance.) Sri Ganesha represents the directional spiritual power that evolves consciousness from matter and expands it to the highest state of unconditioned freedom. The legend of his birth from the soil symbolises this theme.

Evolution to the Human Stage

India's sages discovered the directional urge in evolution ages before modern biologists could get a hint of it. **Although these master minds did not elaborate on the mechanical details of organic evolution, they broadly indicated the trend of it symbolically in the emergence of the incarnations of Lord Mahaa Vishnu** (The word Vishnu means, one who is

all-pervading) as fish (*Matsya*), tortoise (*Koorma*), boar (*Varaaha*), man-lion (*Narasimha*), the little man (*Vaamana*), man holding the axe (*Parashuraama*), the King (*Sri Raama*), man holding the plough (*Balaraama*), and Sri Krishna, the supremely evolved man of perfection. This not only indicates the organic evolutionary trend that culminated in man, but also the trend of man's social evolution and the greater evolutionary potential in him.

In the Puraana-s and ancient books on medical sciences, there are significant hints on the secrets of evolution.

Thus the seers in their exploration discovered that it was the subtle spiritual energy of *Praana* that projected forth the material world and phenomenon of life. In beings below man, this urge to evolve functions almost mechanically pushing the life-stream towards a major breakthrough in man.

In him life blossoms as a highly conscious individuality. He arrives at a stage capable of consciously activating the potential spiritual energy for an evolutionary thrust forward to greater stages of freedom.

Man is not usually well aware of this possibility. He has to direct his energies consciously to integrate himself and evolve. Western philosophers like Nietzsche talk about the possible emergence of the superman, but having no adequate knowledge of the subtle facts of the phenomenon of man, their utterances are vague and do not point out the way of this unfoldment. India's Rishi-s could.

How best can we symbolise by a figure the emergence of life from earth, the unfoldment of consciousness from matter and from primitive beings to the stage of man, and the way for him to realise his potential of super consciousness.

Sri Ganesha's form becomes significant.

His blissful form holds such a sublime theme that it gives scope for interpretation from several angles.

Saint Jnaneshwar, the youthful preceptor of the thirteenth century, begins his profound commentary on the Bhagavad-gita, thus:

Om Sri Ganeshaaya Namah

Om Namah Sri Aadyaa

Veda pradipaadyaa

Jaya jaya swasamvedyaa

Aathmaroopaa

“Om Salutations to the auspicious First Cause, the very theme of the Veda-s. Glory to Him who is the Supreme Truth who is in supreme awareness of Himself.”

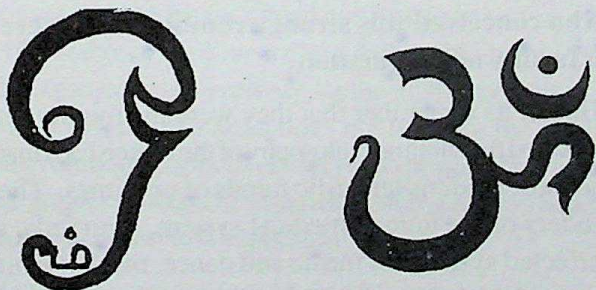
In a splendid allegory Sri Jnaneshwar describes Sri Ganesha's garments, the four arms, the insignia, the tusk, the trunk, the ears and the sweet cake, *Modaka*, he holds, all as representing the various branches of knowledge and spiritual wisdom that lead man to the blissful awareness of the supreme Truth. He begins the commentary with the following words: “By the Grace of my Guru, Sri Nivrithinath, I prostrate in salutation to Sri Ganesha, who is the very form of *Pranavam*, the first Cause of the universe.”

With a masterly touch the seers co-ordinated their insights to convey profound messages. The Ganesha theme is an excellent example. Sri Ganesha represents the foremost spiritual power that initiates greater expression at every stage. At the initial phase of the emergence of the manifested universe, He figuratively represents the primeval power vibration of Brahman and is symbolized by ॐ (OM). This power is the cause of the phenomenal manifestation. The name Ganapathi, means the Lord of the *ganaa*-s which are the smallest and the largest subtle creative fields of energy and elements that cause the manifestation of the universe

of diversity and the organs of sensation and actions in living beings. He is Vighneshwara, the Lord who clears all impediments, the very spiritual power that removes the obstacles on the way of life's progress from primitive forms to man. And in man He is the Presiding Deity of the evolutionary energy *Kundalini*, potent with infinite powers.

The strange figure of Sri Ganesha with his rat mount, that appears like a modern sur-realistic theme, is not a mere figment of imagination as some people would like to believe, but a supra-scientific theme related to the nature of evolution, the unfoldment of consciousness and the means of intensification of human consciousness for the expression of its divine dimensions.

Sri Muthuswami Deekshithar, the celebrated composer of Carnatic music and mystic, described the face of Sri Ganesha as *Pranava-swaroopa-vakrathundam*, the face with the tusk having the very form of *Pranavam* (ॐ), the primeval vibration. *Pranavam* represents the first creative throbbing of *Shakthi*, the power latent in Brahman. Lord Shiva symbolises Brahman and Goddess Paarvathi, the *Shakthi* (Power) of Brahman. It is *Shakthi* that sets Shiva in a creative splendour, and then the first Cause of the universe, *Pranavam*, emerges as the primeval vibration. Sri Ganesha is the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi. Thus, He figuratively represents *Pranavam*.



Pranavam symbol in Tamil and Sanskrit

Sanskrit and Tamil are major ancient languages of India and both eminently project the same heritage evolved in the region. Their alphabets are very different, yet the letters which represent Om have a remarkable semblance. If the Sanskrit Om resembles the head of an elephant with raised trunk, the Tamil Om has almost the same shape with a downward trunk. In fact, in all the major Indian languages, although the alphabets vary much, this resemblance is noticeable in the case of the letter that represents Om.

From *Pranavam* evolved the universe; and the latent consciousness in matter sprang forth in the form of living beings finally reaching the human stage. The figure of Sri Ganesha along with his rat mount symbolises the whole theme. The Ganesha theme is a signpost for man showing him the way of directing the evolutionary energy within to reinforce and realise his superior potentials.

Let us examine the figure, which, as Saint Jnaneshwar points out, contains volumes of spiritual wisdom condensed into a form.

The Rat Mount

Among all the animals, the lowly rat is given the pride of place as the mount of Sri Ganesha. How can a huge figure with the head of an elephant and an equally big pot-belly choose the tiny rat for a mount? Rat and elephant- what a contrast! If a rat is made to sit on an elephant that is rational. **Here an elephantine figure is supposed to sit calmly on a humble rat! Were those seers who conceived this strange combination, mere babes in their faculty of imagination?**

But let us remember that they were the mighty intellects who conceived the sublime philosophy of the Upanishads that inspire even the most modern scientific minds of our times. They were the founders of the unique medical system, Ayurveda, and the very perfected systems of music and dance, most of which now receive world-wide attention. Modern mathematics rests on the

foundation of their inventions. It is about their profound knowledge the French historian Victor Cousin, says: **“When we read with attention the philosophical monuments of the Orient - above all those of India - we discover there many a truth so profound that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy.”**

Rat is an earthy animal. It is born in the womb of the earth. It lives in the holes of the earth; its body and head almost touch the earth. According to Indian philosophy consciousness is latent in the very grains of the earth. It emerges into an active state first through rudimentary life forms, and the intelligence finds its early expression in the lowest vertebrates. Rat is a suitable animal to represent this stage. It symbolises the primitive stages of intelligence enveloped in ignorance and the resultant avariciousness, anxiety and restlessness.

On the other hand, the elephant is a symbol of strength and wisdom. Elephant is said to have a remarkable memory power and it possesses faculties of discrimination. There are examples of elephants, like the one named Guruvayoor Kesavan of the famed Sri Krishna temple of Guruvayoor in Kerala, which has even shown a remarkable sense of piety. The elephant's head can also be the best symbol to express the power of removing any obstacle on the way. Its trunk can pick up a tiny pin as well as the heaviest road block. To indicate the power and wisdom of an expanded state of consciousness an elephant's head can be used as a fine symbol - a symbol capable of evoking in the subconscious mind a sense of strength, expansion and reverence for the mighty powers in Nature. Although an elephant's head does not indicate the direction of physical evolution, it effectively serves to project the evolutionary theme of greater power and expansion. A big human head cannot symbolize this power and expansion.

Thus, two animals are adopted to symbolise two stages - one, the primitive state of consciousness and the other, the wisdom

and power of expanded consciousness.

And it is the human body that connects these two symbols. Consciousness expands through myriads of beings and acquires an intensive and powerful stature through the medium of the human body. Now its potential is immense. Man has the freedom to evolve and transform himself to a superman capable of founding a super civilization. He is even capable of attaining supreme liberation transcending his biological limitations.

Sri Ganesha theme represents this forward movement of consciousness to expansion and freedom.

Yes, the huge figure of Sri Ganesha rests on the tiny rat - a theme of consciousness expanding to its mammoth dimensions from the humblest beginning.

Man is eager to know the unknown and this represents the natural urge to embrace the still unattained reaches of consciousness. *Throughout the organic evolution what was happening was not the evolution of consciousness, but the evolution of the equipment to express the higher planes of consciousness.* Nature has given man the faculty to further evolve himself through his own effort.

The Way of Expansion

Nature demands a determined and disciplined psychological effort for man's evolutionary transformation. Man has certain characteristics of a rat and those of an elephant. Rat is a restless animal hectically running here and there, guided by its impulses. The elephant is a majestic animal with immense potential power, but normally calm and composed.

Despite all the higher faculties dormant in him, man often prefers to remain in the lower conscious level of the rat, as an impulsive, nervous, fearful being. But he has the capability for growing to the power and wisdom of a higher life. The choice is his.

The mighty figure of Sri Ganesha reminds us of this fact and shows the way of focussing the inner energies for the realisation of the greater possibilities.

The Middle Path

Mark that in the usual figure of Sri Ganesha, one foot is depicted as touching the earth and the other lifted and placed on the other thigh.

This suggests that the middle path is the most suitable for human evolution as pointed out in the Bhagavad-gita. The foot touching the earth suggests man to live an active life on earth, while the other lifted leg exhorts him not to indulge too much in the earthy way of life. It reminds him to be mindful of the transitoriness and illusions of life and to be in communion with the eternal divine Reality within, for guidance to embrace the glory of spiritual freedom.

Pot Belly

Sri Ganesha has a big pot-belly. He can hold in him anything. The entire universe is in him. No power can ever subjugate Him. This symbolises that one, who has attained spiritual composure, has mastered the world by achieving mastery over his own mind. Pleasure and pain have no undue impact on him. He is a *Sthitha Prajna* - a supremely balanced man. Even the practice to reach this conscious state frees one from great fear, says the Bhagavad-gita.

Paasha, the Noose

Many of the divine forms are depicted as having several hands holding certain symbols and weapons. This is an effective way adopted by the ancients to symbolise sublime spiritual principles and to suggest the ways for man to outgrow his ordinary state for realising his spiritual potentials and freedom.

The usual figure of Sri Ganesha has four hands. He holds in one of his hands *paasha*, the noose and in another hand *ankusha*,

the hook. A noose is often used as a symbol to signify the nature of sense attachment. In *Sri Lalithaa sahasra-naama*, a hymn on Divine Mother vibrant with spiritual power, the sense attachment and desires are depicted as having the form of a noose *raagaswaroop-paasha*. Uncontrolled senses entangle man in delusion and deflect him from the paths that lead him to a higher cultural and spiritual existence.

Here the noose is depicted as a device in Sri Ganesha's hands. Noose, of course, represents a binding force. But in the hands of the Divine it becomes a liberating device. A noose is used as the reins to control a turbulent horse. Senses often behave like unbridled wild horses. They should be controlled by the reins of discrimination. The horses, if allowed to run wild, would overthrow the chariot and endanger the life of the charioteer. Unchecked senses exhaust and dissipate the inner energies, driving one to the doom of discontentment and frustration. As advised in the Bhagavad-gita, man must achieve control over his senses and concentrate whole-heartedly for the perfection of his work and through such self-culture he can evolve to his greater dimensions. By controlling the sense and sublimating desires, if one perseveres with calm steadiness and determination in self culture one will find the joy of inner expansion and freedom. Thus the noose in Sri Ganesha's hand symbolises the reins of discrimination by which man can control his senses and desires and concentrate his energies for spiritual freedom.

Ankusha, the Hook

Another hand holds a more powerful weapon, the *ankusha*, the hook. If the noose controls the sense - the horses, the hook is meant to tackle the powerful elephants that may go wayward - the emotions and passions. While uncontrolled senses may sap a man's vitality and make him inefficient and frustrated, unbridled emotions and passions can make him wild and blind. Under their sway, like a mad elephant, man may commit any atrocity causing



havoc to others and inviting doom to himself. Therefore, he has to apply the painful hook on the negative passions and emotions for his evolution.

With constant practice to control the senses and emotions, the spiritual seeker experiences the joy of liberation from his lower nature. (The features of the anti-evolutionary lower nature of man that keep him stagnant or degrade him are given in the Bhagavad-gita in the sixteenth chapter: *Daivaasura-sampad-vibhaaga-yoga* - the Yoga of Division between the Divine and Demoniachal Properties.) He becomes aware of the fact that his essential nature transcends the biological events of birth and death.

A serpent twines the body of Sri Ganesha diagonally like a sacred thread. This suggests that in the spiritual seeker the potentials of the mighty *Kundalini* energy becomes expressive. The three strands of the sacred thread symbolise the *Ida*, *Sushumna* and *Pingala*, the subtle paths of the supra-physical energy along the spinal chord. The unawakened *Kundalini* power is often compared to a coiled up serpent in sleep.

The Broken Tusk

The two tusks represent the pairs of opposites, such as pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, etc. The right tusk of Sri Ganesha is depicted as broken. This suggests that the *Sthitha Prajna* - a supremely balanced man - is not a helpless victim trapped in between the fierce tusks of the world - the pairs of opposites. With conscious effort he has broken their stifling grip on him and is free. Ganesha holds the broken piece of the tusk in his right hand like a writing stylus. This symbolises the creative powers acquired by a man of spiritual wisdom.

The right side according to Indian philosophy represents the changeless Reality - the supreme Brahman, and the left, the creative power, *Shakthi*, which is the cause of the universal phenomena of ceaseless changes. It is the right tusk that is broken. This indicates that a *Sthitha Prajna* is well established in his eternal divine

essence, Brahman. The unbroken left tusk symbolises that he lives an active and elevated life fulfilling his role in society like the sages who shine as beacon lights in the path of the evolving mankind.

Modaka, the Delicious Cake

One who practices this evolutionary self-discipline truly enjoys life, because it gives him the opportunity of self-unfoldment to experience the greater dimensions of freedom. He enjoys the real sweetness of living, symbolised by the delicious cake, the *Modaka* - which Sri Ganesha holds. The word *Modaka* means, that which gives joy. It reminds man that Bliss of Eternity is accessible to him, and it is in his own hands. He cannot find it outside him; it is in him. The rat is also depicted as holding a small cake and looking at the visage of its Master, as if seeking his permission to enjoy it. What the rat holds represents the earthy joys, which an evolving man may not completely eschew; he places them under the control of his higher self. His natural impulses are not suppressed with force, but intelligently sublimated with the application of will and discrimination. Thus, a spiritual seeker enjoys the temporal joys without causing harm to others while he expands his realm of spiritual awareness that transcends the temporal and brings him lasting spiritual happiness.

The Third Eye

The higher faculties and freedom of the supremely evolved man is symbolised by the third eye between the eyebrows of Sri Ganesha. Even while he lives on earth he dwells in Eternity. He is one with Sri Ganesha - the One in all.

Thus, life, which is latent in the earth and which finds its early expressions in the lowly beings, finally reaches its crowning glory in the Supreme Consciousness that unfolds in man.

The Crown

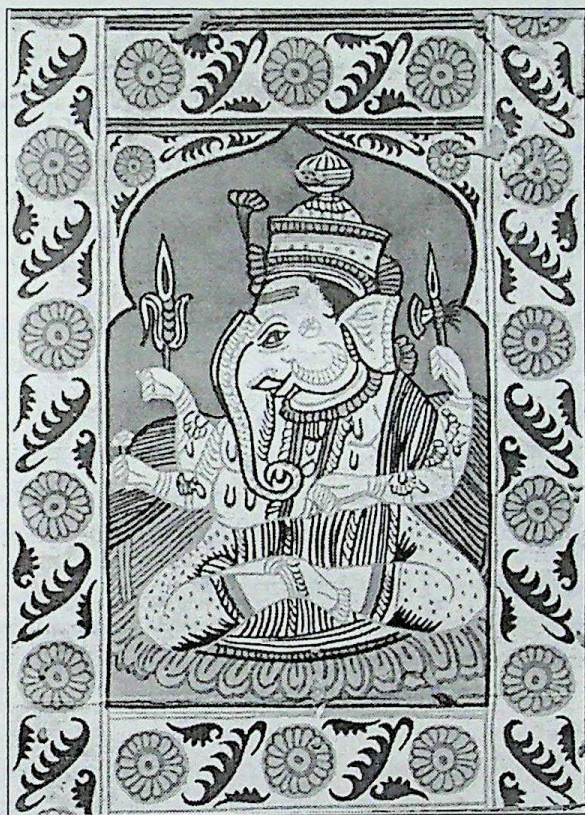
How splendid is the crown of Sri Ganesha! The sparkling

jewels shine like stars. The crown represents the wondrous universe, the very crown of Reality.

Buddhi and Siddhi

In his highest aspect, Sri Ganesha, is the Supreme One without a second - a celibate without a consort. In another aspect he is depicted as having two consorts - *Buddhi* and *Siddhi*. The word *Buddhi* means discriminative intellect, and *Siddhi*, attainment of superior consciousness. How meaningful every description is!

The evolving man will be blessed by both these consorts; he will develop discriminative intelligence and attain superior consciousness. Both the consorts have offspring. To *Buddhi* was born *Kshema* - wellbeing and prosperity, and to *Siddhi*, *Labha*, the attainment of a higher state of being. He who has realised his oneness with Reality lacks nothing, having attained the inner fullness.



Painting from an old astrological treatise

THE LEGENDS

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

Meaningful Legends

SEVERAL Puraana-s, the spiritual epics, like the *Shiva-puraana*, *Linga-puraana*, *Ganesha-puraana*, *Mudgala-puraana* and *Meaningful Legends*

SEVERAL Puraana-s, the spiritual epics, like the *Shiva-puraana*, *Linga-puraana*, *Ganesha-puraana*, *Mudgala-puraana* and some other epics contain legends about Sri Ganesha's different manifestations and their missions. some other epics contain legends about Sri Ganesha's different manifestations and their missions.

The Puraana-s are a blend of highly imaginative stories and subjective truths. They are like abstract paintings, which have a subtle breakaway stance from the common vision, and deflect human thought from its ordinary grooves, thus enabling it to reach for the extraordinary. They were evolved by seers to inculcate life-refining values in the common man, while helping the intellect to transcend the limitations of the usual conditioned thought.

The Puraana-s -- Their Unique Nature

The Rishi-s gave form to the highly philosophical treatises, the Upanishad-s with a minimum touch or no touch of story element. Thus, the Upanishad-s help those who have an intellectual orientation capable of grasping subjective truths, to break the conditioned shell of the intellect for exploring into the unconditioned Reality. And for the majority, who cannot initially comprehend discussions of an abstract nature, the Rishi-s composed the Puraana-s, which bring the Divine closer to the level of ordinary human concepts, thus lending a helping hand to the mind in its ascension to transcendental heights.

The Upanishad-s open the path of knowledge; the Puraana-s lead to the path of devotion. The higher knowledge acquired through the Upanishad-s imparts a texture of humility to the seeker and it instills in his conditioned self (*Jeevaathma*) a devotional

reverence for his Supreme Self (*Paraamathma*) that he is trying to embrace through the path of knowledge. On the other hand, those who follow the path of devotion, through the reading of Purana-s, recitation of hymns, etc., adoring the Supreme within as a Deity, gradually come closer to the blissful Reality enjoying the sweetness of an emotional involvement. And as they take every step forward to reach the loving embrace of Reality, their awareness and knowledge of their object of adoration naturally increase.

Thus, while the seeker on the path of knowledge will gain a graceful devotional flavour through worship, the one on the path of devotion naturally also acquires a greater perception and knowledge of Reality. Both the paths lead to the same goal - liberation from the biological conditioning and expansion to the freedom of Reality.

A reader of the Puraana-s can observe that often a very earthy story element on reaching its climax blossoms itself in fine poetic language, into a few stanzas of sublime and inspiring philosophical ideas on the Absolute Truth, naturally lifting the mind of the reader from the ordinary to the transcendental. While the Upanishad-s take one on a pilgrimage in the realm of lofty ideas, the Puraana-s generally bring down the Divine to the world of ordinary human beings in order to help the common people to refine and sublimate their emotions and passions to elevate themselves to the divine dimensions within

A deeper study of the legends in the Puraana-s would reveal that they throb with superior knowledge sugar-coated with the story element. It is explicitly mentioned in several Purana-s that the stories have *goodaartham*, that is, hidden meaning. Just as a chemical equation may appear as mere meaningless scratches to some people, these stories may not convey their significance to a cursory reader. But serious students will find them unfolding astounding vistas of meaning. **They will see the sublime facets of cosmic and human situations in these stories, which fundamentally dwell on the evolutionary struggle within man-**

the war between the negative and the positive aspects of the mind in its relentless urge to expand to the freedom of Supreme Existence. To convey the deeper facts which cannot be expressed in ordinary language, the Rishi-s employed Symbolic Stories.

Pranavam (ॐ) and Sri Ganesha

There is a revealing legend in the *Skanda-purana* about the relation between the *Pranavam* sign and the form of Sri Ganesha.

Once Goddess Paarvathi, consort of Lord Shiva, was enjoying the marvellous works of an art gallery in Kailasa, the abode of the divine couple. When the Goddess reached in front of a huge painting of ॐ (Om), the *Pranavam* sign, that represents the subtlest creative vibration of Brahman, which has the semblance of an elephant's head with a raised trunk, she stood there for quite some time enjoying its artistic excellence. Thereupon the divine form of Sri Ganesha took birth from that great symbol of *Pranavam* or *Sabda Brahman*.

Brahman, the causeless Cause, with infinite potentials expresses its *Shakti* (the power or will supreme of the Absolute) as a first vibrant cause in a *leela* (sport) of manifestation. This subtlest vibratory state is represented by the symbol ॐ. This is known as the sign of *Pranavam* or *Sabda Brahman*. The word *sabda* signifies the vibratory state. *Sabda Brahman* means Brahman in its aspect as the first causal vibration. It is the first expression of the infinite possibilities of Brahman in a seed form. And from this seed arises by permutation and combination all the forms of conscious and non-conscious energies which give expression to the manifested universe of infinite diversity. Because of its seed character *Pranavam* is also known as the *Beejaaksharam*, the seed syllable. *Beeja* means seed.

In the chantings of *manthras* - the spiritually potent invocations - of all the religions that originated in India, this seed

syllable is used as a prefix to enhance the power of each *manthra*. Sri Ganesha receives the same supreme importance like ॐ, occupying the pride of place in the beginning of all auspicious actions. As the above-mentioned legend indicate, Sri Ganesha's figure is a dynamic representation of the power of Brahman.

The One Reality, Brahman, in its creative *leela* (sport) assumes a polarisation as Two - *Param-Athma* and *Paraa-Shakthi*, the Soul Supreme and the Power Supreme. These two aspects of Brahman are figuratively symbolised as Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi. The *Paraa-Shakthi* has three power aspects: Power of knowledge (*jnaana shakthi*), power of will (*ichcha shakthi*) and power of action (*kriyaa shakthi*). Lord Ganesha as the son of the divine couple, figuratively represents ॐ, which is the seed and directive force behind every form of energy in the universe. He is Ganapathi, the Lord of the *gana*-s, the powers responsible for the expression and dissolution of the material universe. Therefore, He is invoked first, for the successful fulfillment of every venture, mundane or spiritual.

The legend signifies that the form of Sri Ganesha was spontaneously emerged in the super-consciousness of Rishis, figuratively representing the spiritual power and the wisdom involved in the sacred symbol ॐ.

The Trend of Evolution told in a story

Another story about the birth of Sri Ganesha is in the *Matsya Purana*. It highlights the evolutionary theme of life emerging from matter, evolving and reaching the stage of man to achieve ultimately the supreme Freedom.

One day, when Goddess Paarvathi, was about to take a bath, she rolled some mud that has stuck to her body and with it created a boy. According to yogic knowledge Sri Ganesha is the Lord of the *Moolaadhaara-chakra*, which represents the earth principle at the base of the spinal column in the human body. He was instructed to stand guard and not to allow any one to enter the

pond where She would be bathing. Lord Shiva came there and the boy stopped him, even though his identity was revealed to the boy. It resulted in a clash and Lord Shiva severed the head of the young guard.

Knowing this Goddess Paarvathi was in grief. To console his consort Lord Shiva quickly brought an elephant's head and joined it to the headless body of the boy. The divine couple adopted the revived one as their son. They made him the Lord of all the *gana-s*, the forces that regulate the universe.

To those who are not familiar with the symbolic language of the Rishi-s, who compressed profound knowledge in such legends, the above story may appear frivolous.

In this context, the following observation of Professor Alexander Spirkin, who was a Member of the erstwhile USSR Academy of Sciences, in his book *Dialectical Materialism* (Progress Publishers, Moscow 1983. P.339) is revealing: "The sages of India...knew much that even today is beyond the ken of European scientific thought, or that it ignores, often trying to conceal its helplessnessIt is sometimes difficult for us to penetrate the profound languages of symbolic forms in which this wisdom is couched to get at the essence of that wisdom."

Efforts are essential today to unravel the hidden meaning to get at this profound wisdom that will lead to a deeper understanding about human life and universe.

In some Puraana-s in certain contexts the inner meaning of such legends is also explained, giving a clue to the reader how to open these treasure-chests of knowledge. An exposition in the Puranjano-paakhyaanam section in the Bhaagavatha Puraana is one such excellent example.

In this legend Goddess Paarvathi symbolises the primeval Nature (*Moola Prakriti*) latent with infinite creative possibilities.

From her body - from matter - life emerges and evolved ultimately giving rise to the human being in whom consciousness assumes the limited characteristic of human mind potent with its wonderful faculties. The Sanskrit word *manushya* (man) means the being in whom the mind becomes predominantly expressive. A conditioned state of Supreme Consciousness, human mind, stands in between the two poles of Reality - Nature and Supreme Consciousness. Here the legend presents the human mind as a guard who stands in between Goddess Paarvathi (the creative energy pole of Reality) and Lord Shiva (the pure consciousness pole of Reality).

Goddess Paarvathi goes for a bath instructing the guard not to allow anyone to go near Her. This indicates that Mother Nature while immersed in her creations is even forgetful of her own higher aspect, the unconditioned Reality - Lord Shiva. However, the boy (human mind) who has evolved from her body is potentially capable of realising the Truth through further evolution. Man is destined to embrace Divine Consciousness. And God is eager to manifest Himself through man, as symbolised by Lord Shiva's coming near to the boy. Yet, the human mind has a tendency to resist its own expansion as it is strongly conditioned and bound by the fields of the senses. The conditioned mind of man stand in between as an obstacle to such union of Prakrithi and Purusha in him, the union of the supreme Divine Energy and supreme Consciousness, which would result in his total freedom. This resistance of the mind to the inner natural urge to embrace Reality results in a major conflict in the human condition.

The boy's resistance to Lord Shiva, and the ensuing clash between them indicate this condition. Lord Shiva severing the head of the boy symbolises the final liberation of the human mind from its conditioning limitations to become one with the Supreme Consciousness. The boy's resurrection acquiring the head of an elephant is symbolic of the power and freedom of the transformed state of consciousness. The resurrection makes him the powerful Lord of all the *gana-s* - Ganapathi.

There are other versions about the birth of Sri Ganesha in some other Puraana-s. They all shed light from different angles on the deeper aspects of Truth.

The Destruction of Thripuraasura-s

Lord Shiva slaying the three demons, Thripuraasura-s, is a legend rich in symbolic meaning related to human evolution and emancipation.

Lord Shiva once started a terrible war against the three demons, the Thripuraasura-s. When the war reached its pitch, the axle of Lord Shiva's chariot broke. Unable to move, Shiva became practically a prisoner in the fort of the powerful three demons. Now, Lord Shiva contemplated on his own son, Lord Ganesha, who wards off all obstacles. Thereupon, he could surmount the obstacle and destroy the Thripuraasura-s and their fortress.

Lord Shiva is the Supreme Reality and is supremely free. He is immanent in the whole universe and in all beings. As the living beings exist in different stages of conditioning, they are oblivious of this supremely free Essence in them. Man is in such an evolved state that he is capable of undoing this conditioning limitations and experience his supreme freedom. But the Essence (Lord Shiva) in him having been virtually imprisoned by the conditioning factors, especially the three *guna-s* (described in next page) man has only a very faint awareness of his possibility for supreme freedom. Yet, the evolutionary trend in him is towards restoring him this freedom. All human efforts, whether material or spiritual, are, in fact, the unconscious and conscious striving for the Bliss of this Freedom.

It is said in the story that Lord Shiva in his war with the demons forgot at first to invoke Sri Ganesha, his son. Sri Ganesha represents the liberating primordial spiritual impulse in man and the universe. Basically it is Lord Shiva himself who manifests as man, getting conditioned by the three *guna-s*, the conditioning powers of Nature, and by the limitations of the senses. While

remaining in such a conditioned state, Lord Shiva, conditioned as man, forgets his spiritual freedom and fails to invoke it and regain that freedom by transcending the limitations imposed on him by the three *guna*-s. Oblivious of his Essence (Lord Shiva), man engages himself in a constant struggle to find lasting happiness and freedom in the material dimension. The more he struggles, the more he fails. The axle of his life's chariot breaks. Without invoking his spiritual impulses and evolving from within, the human endeavour for individual and social well-being misfires and brings him misery and pain. It is often in a state of hopelessness, man is prompted to search for his spiritual resources and realizes the immense potentialities of the transcendental Power within. When he starts invoking the spiritual resources, he discovers an infinite and blissful dimension within, the Supreme Source of all happiness and freedom. Now his striving takes the right course.

According to the Vedanta, the Reality in Its creative sport eventually projects as the *Moola Prakrithi*, the unmanifested field of Primeval Nature with infinite creative potential. Primeval Nature has three important conditioning modes of energy, causing the states of harmony, motion and the inertia of solidity, called the three *guna*-s, which are *sathva*, *rajas* and *thamas*. Conditioned by these *guna*-s, the One appears to be many. Under the predominating influence of *thamas*, man remains in an uncultured and unrefined state. When *rajas* predominates he will be over-active, especially in pursuit of temporary pleasures and in an avaricious accumulation of material possessions, without heeding for the values of life. This ultimately brings suffering on himself and others. Influenced by the *sathva*, he will be refined and considerate and will perform his duties aiming at the general welfare of all. Man's individual and social evolution depends on a constant effort to lessen the influences of *thamas* and *rajas* and to cultivate the quality of *sathva*. Creative educational methods aiming at the promotion of *sathva* quality will lead to an evolved society of superior human beings.

Man has even the potentiality of achieving a breakthrough to the absolute freedom of Brahman. For this he has to transcend even the quality of *sathva*, which is a subtle conditioning quality of Nature. When man transcends even *sathva*, he is one with the Supreme.

In the legend, Lord Shiva represents the Supreme Reality. The three demons are the three conditioning *guna*-s. The human body is the fortress of the three demons in which Lord Shiva is imprisoned. When man transcends these three conditioning modes of Nature, he is liberated from the biological cycles of birth and death. The Supreme Reality in man - Lord Shiva - slays the three demons - Thripuraasura-s - and regains the Supreme Freedom - the evolutionary culmination of man.

Modern man can find great treasures of knowledge about himself and the universe from the Purana-s - which console, strengthen and liberate him. Such highly symbolic legends in the Puraana-s remind us that human life is not something to be wasted indulging only in ordinary pleasures, in pomp and vainglory, but it is a potential field for evolutionary expansion to greater dimensions of freedom and emancipation.

(Some followers of the Western religious faiths are concerned and worried that in future science may prove successful in creating life from matter. This concern is caused by the fact that these religious concepts are based on the dualistic idea that matter and life, man and God, are all fundamentally different entities. According to the highest perceptions of Indian philosophy, matter is only the grossest expression of Reality, Brahman, the unconditioned Intelligence. Life force, which is a subtler expression of Intelligence is latent in matter and can emerge from it any time when circumstances favour. Therefore, there is nothing to wonder when proper circumstances are created life force will naturally be expressed in matter.)

You are greater than Your Possessions

Another thought-provoking legend in the Sri Ganesha lore exhorts man not to be proud of his material wealth and power but to expand to enrich himself with the lasting wealth of self-awareness.

The Puraana-s describe Kubera as the wealthiest person in the universe. He became very proud of his material possessions and wanted to show his pomp and power to all. After much thought he found out the way to do this. He decided to invite Lord Ganesha, who is worshipped by all, for a sumptuous feast.

Thus Kebera succumbed to the common weakness widespread in society - the vain craze to show off by giving ostentatious feasts and presents to those who already have enough, unmindful of the misery around and the social responsibility for alleviating it. Sri Ganesha is the Lord of the *gana*-s; he is the source of all that is manifest in the universe. Therefore, if a feast is given to him, the whole universe would come to know about it and honour Kubera as the wealthiest - so thought Kubera.

Sri Ganesha was invited. He promptly arrived on the appointed day. He was seated on a mat. The delicacies were served on a big plantain leaf. The pot-bellied guest began consuming everything quickly. Whatever was served was consumed in no time. Kubera rose to the occasion and supplied loadful of eatables. But before long the richest man of the universe was running short of supply. There was nothing more to satisfy Sri Ganesha's hunger, which was assuming fiery proportions. Seeing that there was no further supply of eatables, Sri Ganesha gulped down all the vessels in front of him. Then he ran into every room in the huge palace and ate whatever he could find there. Still not satisfied, he devoured the entire palace itself. And there was nothing left, except Kubera himself. Ganesha was about to lay his hands on Kubera when the latter took to his heels. Ganesha ran after him, to catch him.

For the first time in his life, Kubera realised that his immense wealth was of no consequence and that it could not save him.

Then the idea of a saving Power dawned in him. Chanting the sacred names of Lord Shiva he ran followed by the elephant-faced little figure. Kubera reached Kailasa, the mountainous abode of Lord Shiva, prostrated before Him and and prayed for protection.

Smilingly the Lord asked Ganesha to halt and gave him a handful of beaten rice. That handful was enough to satisfy the hunger of the Lord of all powers. Not only that, everything Ganesha had consumed came out of his mouth - from the place to the vessels and they reverted themselves to their original places. When his material wealth was exhausted and his reliance on it shattered and pride subdued, the thought of the divine dawned in Kubera and that awareness ultimately saved him.

Here Sri Ganesha symbolises the tremendous power of the all-consuming Time. The avaricious nature of man prompts him to use all his energies in a mad craze for accumulating wealth, which he feels would give him everlasting security. In such a mood he forgets his fellow beings and his higher possibilities and greater destiny. And then he invites Time for the great feast, which consumes everything that he has painstakingly gathered. How relevent this story is in our times! Even people who are supposed to be very intelligent do no better than Kubera and invite doom for themselves.

Wealth, health, scholarship, etc., often keep the human mind confined and complacent with the mistaken notion that they are an end in themselves, forgetting that they are only the means for a smooth expansion of human life. The lasting spiritual dimensions are relegated as of no consequence. Years slip by and man discovers that many things that he had cherished and in which he had put all his faith, have already been consumed by Time. Kubera could at least discover it before it was too late and correct himself. But many people do not. They allow their receptive faculties to become dull to the greater dimensions. The result is a life of constant disharmony and mental tension.

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

But some others are more fortunate. As happened to Kubera, turning points may occur in the life of even a blind materialist. He may discover the consoling truth that there is an intensive, eternal inner dimension in life and that he can expand from within. The transformation brought about by the new awareness is sometimes astounding. There are instances of even incurable diseases vanishing when man gets an access to the dimensions of the Spirit. A new man of greater vision is born.

Those who cultivate from the young age the awareness of the inner realm are fortunate. As the years pass by, they will experience an expansion. The petals unfold themselves, the flower blooms with all fragrant freshness, a fruit eventually takes shape and it slowly gets filled with sweetness, a new flavour and freshness. Those who do not try to discover their greater dimensions are like non-fruit bearing flowers, which simply wither away. Others enjoy every phase of life and the new freshness it assumes at every stage. Life does not delude them; death does not perturb them.

A lesson in Realisation to Child Ganesha

There is a very humane story as to how the Divine Mother taught child Ganesha a lesson on the unity of all life, cultivating in him love for all beings.

Once child Ganesha was playing with a cat. He playfully pulled its tail and rolled the poor animal in mud causing it pain and discomfort, before letting it go. When tired he ran to his mother, Goddess Paarvathi and sat on her lap for being caressed. But he found that his mother was in a very sad mood. He looked at her face and to his dismay he found that she was writhing in pain. And he found that her body was smeared with mud and there were several scratches. He asked her about the cause of her agony and how she got herself smeared in mud. She lovingly told him that it was all caused by the unkind behaviour of Ganesha himself. "O Mother, how can you utter such unkind words to me who loves you so deeply," Ganesha protested, "I have never done this to you." "You alone did this," asserted the Goddess, "When

you pulled my tail and rolled me in mud, you were very unkind to me." Ganesha quickly understood the point. "Now I understand, Mother," Ganesha said, "Harming any being is harming you."

The Puraana-s sometimes bring down the Divine to the very level of human emotions and actions in order to help man to sublimate them and elevate himself to his divine nature. There is an amusing story how child Ganesha ended a misunderstanding between his parents. Once he found that his parents, Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi were in an irreconcilable mood. Then he demanded for a kiss from each one, on one of his cheeks, simultaneously. As they came close to him and kissed him from both sides, he quickly withdrew causing the parents kiss each other. There ended the semblance of any quarrel.

Jnaana Pazham, the Fruit of Knowledge

The means to know the Truth lies in the effort to know oneself. He who knows the Source of his origin knows everything. There is a legend in the Ganesha lore that highlights this profound truth.

One day the great sage Naarada reached the icy heights of Mount Kailas, the legendary abode of Lord Shiva and his consort Goddess Paarvathi. He offered them a pomegranate fruit. Their sons, Sri Subrahmanya and his brother, Sri Ganesha desired to have the luscious fruit.

But this is not an ordinary fruit. It is the fruit with the juice of Supreme Wisdom, the fruit that imparts the sweetness of the absolute awareness of the Self. It is a Whole by itself and cannot be divided. Therefore, the Divine Couple declared that the one who took a round of the infinite universe and returned to them first would be eligible for the fruit. Immediately Sri Subrahmanya began his great journey on his speedy pea-cock mount and disappeared like a lightning into the depths of infinity. What can Sri Ganesha do! His mount is the slow rat who has to carry a big figure with a pot-belly! But Ganesha was calm. He just went round his parents

and extended his palm for the fruit. **“Have you so quickly gone round the infinite universe?”** amusingly queried the Divine Couple. Ganesha was quick to reply them enquiringly, **“What else is the universe other than you both, my own Source?”** “O You are the eligible one for this fruit,” said they and presented him the fruit.

When Subrahmanya returned after his round of the infinite universe, he could not believe his own eyes. Ganesha, who had gone nowhere, has earned the fruit ! The Divine Couple told him what had happened. Sri Subrahmanya then understood that the one who comes to know the Supreme Truth as one's own inmost Being naturally gets the Fruit of Supreme Wisdom.

“If so I am going for penance to gain the Supreme Wisdom,” said Subrahmanya. A legend in Tamil says that Lord Shiva told him then *‘palam nee’* which means, ‘Thou art that Fruit’. It is said that the renowned pilgrim centre, Palani, in south India, with a temple dedicated to Lord Subrahmanya on a hilltop, derived its name from this advice *palam nee* and it is believed to be the place where Sri Subrahmanya did penance to realise the Truth, *palam nee-’Thath Thvam Asi’* - Thou art That.

Knowledge of the manifold mechanisms, actions and reactions, of the entire material universe cannot give man an answer to his eternal quest: ‘Who or What am I?’ This is what is symbolised by Sri Subrahmanya's rounding of the whole universe, and yet not being eligible to receive the ‘fruit’. Rabindranath Tagore so well points out his human situation in *Gitanjali* when he says that the pilgrim after knocking at all the available doors outside, returns at last to knock at the door of his own heart.

A Quiz

An interesting story in Vidyakara's *Subhaashita-rathnaakaram* reveals the immanence of the Shiva-Shakthi principle in the whole universe.

Lord Shiva has an aspect called *Ardha-naareeshwara*, the

half male and half female form - a combined form of Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi.

Sri Subrahmanya asks his brother Sri Ganesha a very enigmatic question: "When half of our father and half of our mother join together to form Ardhanareeshwara, what happens to their other halves?"

Sri Ganesha answers: "The other half of father has transformed into all that has an immanent male principle in the universe, and the other half of mother, into whatsoever that has the female principle."

The Moon Humbled

There is a belief that if one looks at the moon on the night of *chathurthi*, the fourth day after the new Moon in the month of Bhaadrapada (August - September), an auspicious day for the worship of Sri Ganesha, it might cause one to get a bad name. Possibly the ancients have possessed the knowledge of some subtle adverse influence of the Moon on the human mind that day. The following amusing legend which discourages people from looking at the Moon that night has also come into vogue.

One night, after a sumptuous feast, Ganesha was returning home on the back of his rat mount. On the small ridge in a field the rat slipped, and the heavy figure on its back fell down. And the Moon, who witnessed this funny incident, could not control his burst of laughter. The angry Ganesha cursed the Moon that anyone who looked at the Moon would acquire ill fame. Thereafter, there was no one to look at the Moon and appreciate his beauty. The repentant Moon prayed to Sri Ganesha for forgiveness and pleaded for release from the effect of the curse.

And Sri Ganesha, who could be easily pleased, restricted the effect of the curse only for the night of the *chathurthi* day (the fourth day after the new moon), in the month of Bhaadrapada (August-September), which is considered to be the day of the first manifestation of Sri Ganesha. (The fourth day after the new moon

or after the full moon is known as *chathurthi*.) All the *chathurthi* days after the full moon are observed as *sankata-harana chathurthi* (the *chathurthi* day that dispels grief), with earnest prayers to Lord Ganesha, as this day has a special power to remove the miseries of life. Sri Ganesha is worshipped in the evening during this day.

The fourth day of the waxing moon in the lunar calendar which is known as *Chathurthi* considered as the birth day of Sri Ganesha has a special message. The day symbolizes the dawn of the fourth dimension of consciousness.

We experience only three states of consciousness in our ordinary life - wakeful state, dreaming state and the state of deep sleep. The great spiritual explorers - the rishi-s- experienced that there is a fourth state of consciousness, which they called the *Thuriya* or the fourth dimension. At this state the consciousness transcends the time-space conditioning, and this is known as *samaadhi*. The attainment of this state of consciousness through practice liberates one from the pain-pleasure duality enabling one to experience the bliss of liberation of consciousness (*aananda*) from conditioned body-bound existence and this is a major step to *Poorna Praja*-the perfect consciousness, the ultimate cause of all phenomenal existence. The *chathurthi* (the fourth) day of the waxing Moon symbolizes the human mind evolving to this fourth dimension of consciousness. The eventual Full Moon signifies the perfection of consciousness.

According to astrology, the Sun represents the splendor of *Aathman* or Brahman, the Supreme Soul, the timeless Reality, and Moon represents the mind, which is a conditioned and limited expression of *Aathman*. The light that Moon sheds is only the reflected light of the Sun. Mind is only a reflection of the Supreme Intelligence expressed through the limitations of the human brain, like the sunlight reflected through the medium of the Moon. **The great sages of yore presented this principle of relationship between the Supreme Intelligence and the human mind**

comparing it with the relationship between the Sun and the Moon.

The gradual expansion of human consciousness to its fullness as the timeless Intelligence - *Poorna Prajna* - is comparable to the gradual expression of Moon beginning from the new moon and reaching its fullness on the full moon day.

In ordinary circumstances, human mind is tied up with the external phenomenal world and it is tossed by the pleasures and pains created by this involvement. In such a condition man is ignorant of the greater dimensions and higher possibilities of his life. Yet there is latent in him an inner urge, a natural biological thrust, to exceed the limitations and evolve. Those who are inspired by this urge move in this evolutionary direction by acquiring knowledge and practising the relevant disciplines. But there are many people who remain confined to their egoistic limitations denying to themselves the higher possibilities and who even ridicule the efforts of others in this direction. Their mind is enveloped by ignorance like the thick curtain of darkness that hides the Moon during the new moon day.

However, the inquisitive person continues his evolutionary effort. If he is sincere and makes an earnest and open-minded effort he will break through the darkness and begin to experience the rays of greater awareness. His mind gets brighter as he proceeds. But, of course, in the initial stages it is often a trial and error effort, falling and getting up and searching the way in darkness. At this stage one may have to face the many doubts arising from the superficial areas of one's own mind and the ridicule from the outer world.

Lord Ganesha is the presiding Deity of the *Moolaadhaara-chakra*, the gateway to spiritual evolution and experience. His face symbolizes *Pranavam* - ॐ - the primeval creative vibration of Brahman.

According to this legend, when Lord Ganesha was slowly

moving on His rat mount the rat slipped on a stone causing a fall to Ganesha inviting a burst of laughter from the Moon. As mentioned above, the Moon represents the limited human mind. The Moon's laughter symbolizes the doubts and ridicule one who is making a striving for spiritual expansion has to face.

However, proceeding ahead following this evolutionary trend, maintaining a rational spirit of exploration, breaking the shell of ordinary reasoning, one begins to experience the deeper facts. The light of knowledge brightens and one embraces the timeless freedom of unconditioned Intelligence, represented by the Full Moon.

It is often the pride of one's youth, power, position, etc., that prompts one to ridicule others. However, any thoughtful person can realize these are very evanescent factors and that such pride has to inevitably submit itself to the power of Time. Such people, who get very proud of these temporary states, but not having found their deeper moorings in the timeless Spirit, get dispirited when they lose them as time passes on. They realize that they are practically being neglected by the world. This is represented by the remorseful Moon, when he no longer gets the attention of people who once admired him. On the other hand the cultivation of the communion with the Eternal Fact within would have made them feel more blissful as time moves on. The remorseful Moon begs for redemption and he is redeemed. This symbolizes that even if one is fallen thus, Nature does not deny one the right of spiritual expansion any time if one chooses it.

Kaveri Flows Out

An interesting story about the origin of Kaveri, a great river in South India, tells that Sage Agsthya, through his intense penance, received the river Kaveri in a potential form in his *kamandalu* (the water-pot carried by ascetics). The sage was so much happy to have the holy Kaveri beside him that he forgot to release the waters for the benefit of mankind. Then there occurred a devastating famine in South India. The drought affected millions. Indra, the

king of gods, invoked Sri Ganesha for help. Assuming the form of a crow, Sri Ganesha flew in to the deep forests in the Sahya mountains where sage Agasthya was immersed in meditation in his Ashram. The crow sat on the top of the *kamandalu* placed beside the sage and tilted it. The joyous Kaveri poured out, assumed huge proportions and watered the plains bringing succour to the teeming millions.

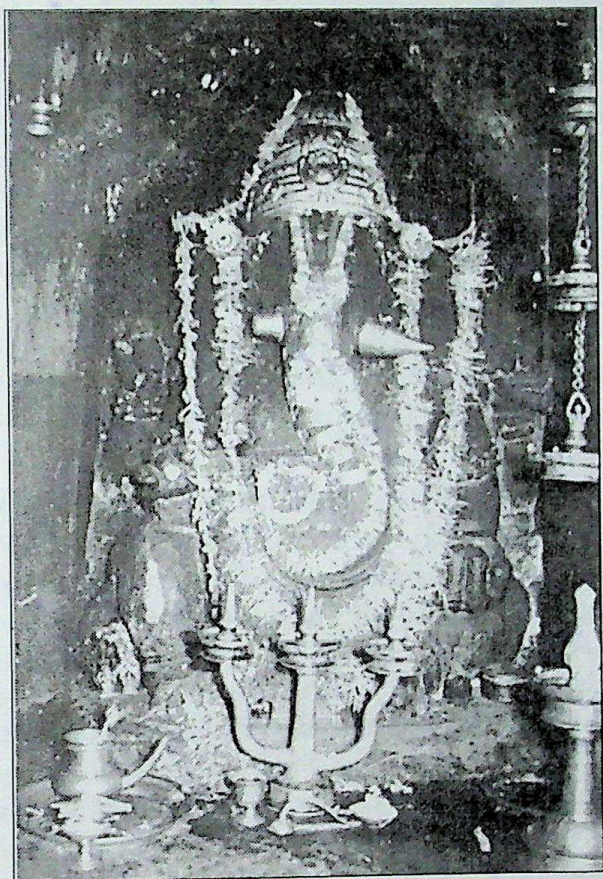
Ganesha - Vishnu

There is a beautiful legend in *Bhaargava-puraana* which highlights the essential oneness of different forms of God. One day, in Kailasa, Goddess Paarvathi was celebrating the birthday of Lord Ganesha. On that occasion, Vishvadeva, a great devotee of Lord Vishnu happened to come to Kailasa. The Divine Mother invited him for the feast. He informed the Goddess that he used to take food only after getting the vision (*darshan*) of Lord Mahaavishnu. Lord Ganesha who was there, immediately transformed himself into Lord Vishnu and gave him the vision. This legend points out the fact that all earnest spiritual pursuits, though on diverse paths, would lead to the same Truth.

Other Stories

There is a legend on how Sri Ganesha outwitted the demon-king Ravana, who had obtained a powerful Shiva-linga idol, from Lord Shiva Himself, and got it installed in Gokara, in Karnataka, for the larger benefit of the world. Likewise, there is another story of his getting installed a Vishnu idol possessed by Vibhishana, brother of Ravana, at Srirangam, in Tamilnad.

Innumerable are the legends of the Ganesha lore that are not only thought-provoking to the serious enquirers of Truth, but also entertainingly instructive to the common man conveying ennobling messages.



Sri Siddhi Vinaayaka
in Srimadananteshwara Vinaayaka Temple, Madhur

WORSHIP

Devotional Worship

BRAHMAN, the Supreme, is the central Cause of all diversity. In essence, everything is Brahman, and there can be nothing outside it. From this sublime standpoint, Advaita philosophy considers any name and form that reminds man of the transcendental glory of the Supreme as sacred and worshipful. In the *Harinaama Keerthanam*, a superb hymn on Lord Vishnu, composed in Malayalam by the philosopher poet Thunchath Ezhuthachan, it is said: "Among the crores and crores of Thy sacred Names, there is none that is irrelevant." **This is the rationale behind the pantheistic character of India's spiritual vision. Indian philosophy beholds the One as the many, and the many as the One.**

This approach to the sublime Truth through diverse paths, enjoying the special characteristics of each path, according to the psychological disposition of the seeker, highlights the freedom of enquiry which is the basic characteristic of India's spiritual pursuit. There is no conflict between unity and diversity, because diversity is an expression of the supreme unity. That is why great saints and exponents of Advaita philosophy, from Sri Adi Shankaracharya to Sri Narayana Guru composed soul-stirring hymns on several divine forms.

Communion with the Eternal

Human brain, is equipped to receive diverse impulses from the external world; and it has also subtle receptors that can bring it in communion with the powerful spiritual realm within. This communion attunes human life with the harmony of the universe.

Members of the animal kingdom below man live almost an impulsive life, controlled by the external environment, although we can notice the expressions of a sense of higher values among

them. Man is subject both to the powerful pulls of the environment and to the gentle promptings of his superior evolutionary possibilities. As the English poet Dryden says:

Men are the children of a larger growth

But man often chooses himself to be controlled by the vagaries of the environment instead of availing his finer faculties for communion with his higher Self. The receptors in his brain which are meant to receive the higher messages get blunted. The doors that open the mind to greater truths are closed. (This is what Darwin mentions as the atrophy of the brain on which the higher tastes depend.) The ancient explorers of Truth devised means to help us activate these faculties and experience the soothing breeze of spiritual solace and strength and the larger vision it brings. A balanced mental approach in its relation with both the external world and the inner spiritual realm will evolve man to the greater dimensions of freedom.

One-sided involvement with the external world and exclusive dependence on the material side for 'security' keeps man in the thralldom of the environment. It turns him into a mindless bundle of animal reactions - anxious, fearful and suspicious. This human condition is well reflected in the following lines in a letter the author received from a reader in a prosperous Western country : **"We are a very fast-paced, anxiety-ridden country, and people need to learn how to slow down and relax. We may have a lot of economic advantage but there is little peace of mind and true happiness here."**

Devotional Outlook

Cultivation of devotion, if it is not vitiated by fanatical sentimentalism, is a scientific means to establish this communion with Reality. It is not a slavish and mindless surrender as some people would like to picture it. Devotion is a sensitive means to activate the spiritual receptors in our being. It is a rational and practical way to outgrow the limitations of our ordinary ego-centric

personality and attain the greater freedom of our divine Self. During devotional piety, the conditioned human intelligence shedding its self-imposed limitations, expands in tune with the all-powerful Supreme Intelligence leading to a miraculous spiritual transformation.

Devotion is love - love for the supreme Fact in us. Whether we love the formless Supreme or earnestly conceive It by a form, the result is the same - invoking the divine grace to elevate life to its blissful dimensions. For many, an icon is an effective means to cultivate devotion. One is not worshipping the stone or metal of the icon as such, (as some people illogically feel), but the divine Essence represented by it. The Advaitic vision can well see that the Essence is the same whether it is in a block of stone or in a living being.

In the super conscious state of the exploring sages emerged the insightful vision of divine forms that represent certain aspects and powers of the Supreme. The seers developed a very co-ordinated spiritual technology to activate the aspects of the power of the Divine in icons and installed them in temples to help man's communion with the Supreme. For instance, when a devotee worships the blissful figure of Sri Ganesha that embodies the obstacle-removing grace of Brahman, he is activating the same divine aspect immanent in him and in the universe, which positively influences and modifies the texture of his life. Reading of sacred books and *hymns*, *japa* (devotional repetition of sacred Names and *mantras*) have a life-refining and reinforcing spiritual effect. Temples form an effective medium to bring man closer to the Divine.

Human beings have several desires and aspirations. Appropriate actions to achieve them, if they do not go against *Dharma*, the laws for achieving higher harmony, are conducive to their spiritual evolution. As the phenomenal universe is evolved and influenced by three binding energy modes of Nature, *sathva* (harmony), *rajas* (motion) and *thamas* (inertia), there will be their

natural impact in human life also. The seers advise us to overcome the adverse effects of *thamas* and *rajas* and increase the quality of *sathva* by invoking the appropriate divine powers which would help one realise the aspirations in harmony with *Dharma*. That is the way for human life to progress towards its ultimate fulfillment.

Fifty-one Manifestations of Sri Ganesha

The sages discovered that every vibrant aspect of Nature has a divine characteristic, as fundamentally everything is divine. All the vibratory powers of Nature emerge from the subtlest vibration, represented by ॐ. Their permutation and combination give rise to the infinite phenomena of the universe. The 51 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are a symbolic representation of the major vibratory states originating from the primeval ॐ.

(The formless Reality and the vibrant Form-Power aspects of Reality are to be understood as complementary, not contradictory. This is the perfect, integrated view of Indian philosophy. The profound manthra science developed by the ancient sages is based on this understanding. It is this Form-Power aspects of Reality that are invoked for commonweal in temples.)

Sri Ganesha, who represents ॐ, is considered to have 51 manifestations, corresponding to the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet, and symbolising the divine powers of these vibrant states.

Thirty-Two Important Forms

Of these 51 forms 32 are considered as very important aspects of Sri Ganesha for invocation to realise certain aspirations. The following are the names of these forms: 1. Baala Ganapathi 2. Tharuna Ganapathi 3. Bhaktha Ganapathi 4. Veera Ganapathi 5. Shakthi Ganapathy 6. Dwija Ganapathi 7. Siddhi Ganapathi (Pingala Ganapathi) 8. Uchchishta Ganapathi 9. Vighnaraaja Ganapathi 10. Kshipra Ganapathi 11. Heramba Ganapathi 12. Lakshmi Ganapathi 13. Mahaa Ganapathi 14. Vijaya Ganapathi (Bhuvanesha Ganapathi) 15. Nriththa Ganapathi 16. Udw

Ganapathi 17.Eekaakshara Ganapathi 18.Vara Ganapathi
19.Thryakshara Ganapathi 20.Kshipra Ganapathi 21.Haridra
Ganapathi 22.Eekadantha Ganapathi 23.Shrishti Ganapathi
24.Uddhanda Ganapathi 25.Rnamochaka Ganapathi 30.Yoga
Ganapathi 31.Durgaa Ganapathi 32.Samkata Harana Ganapathi.

Shodasha Ganapathi-s

Among the above-mentioned thrity-two forms, the first sixteen are considred to be the most powerful aspects. These forms are known as Shodasa Ganapathi-s. Special body complexions and insignia are attributed to these forms.

The sixteen forms of Sri Ganesha described in this text give a general idea of the special spiritual aspects represented by these divine forms. There are some variations in the descriptions in different texts. However, the main purpose of the forms is to evoke certain divine moods in the mind of the devotee for invoking special aspects of spiritual power to achieve certain objectives. But these aspects should not be considered as rigidly compartmentalised. When there is concentrated devotion on a particular power aspect, other aspects are aslo naturally invoked. Every form is one with the other, as each form represents certain specific aspects of the same Reality. The science of *manthra*, evolved by the seers is a rational technology of human evolution. **Instead of wasting precious human energy, time and money on inventing destructive weapons, if human intellect had explored these positive sciences of the ancients to get a greater understanding about man and Nature, a superior human civilization would have been evolved.**

Dhyaana Sloka-s The Hymns for Meditation

Several savants have composed *dhyaana sloka-s*, special hymns for meditation, on these aspects of Sri Ganesha. The *dhyaana sloka-s* given here are from the book, *Sri Tathwanidhi*, composed by Maharaja Mummudi Krishnaraja Odeyar, of Karnataka (Courtesy: *Glory of Ganesha*, published by central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay)



Repetition of the *dhyaana sloka-s* or even earnest contemplation on the aspects would invoke the divine powers.

The dhyaana slokas, given under each aspect, are intended to evoke a spiritual *bhaava* or mood in the devotee. More than their literary content, the creation of this *bhaava* is their mission. **Through that *bhaava* the limited human ego submits itself to the greater powers within and the intervention of these powers often brings about miraculous results.**



SRI BAALA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री बालगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

बालःसक् कदली चूत पनसेक्षु च मोदकम् ।
बालसूर्यमहं वन्दे देवं बालगणाधिपम् ॥

Meditation on Sri Baala Ganapathi

*Baalah srak kadalee chootha panasekshu cha modakam
Baalasoorya-maham vande devam Baalaganaadhipam*

“Obeisance to Sri Baalaganapathi, who is the Lord of the *gana-s*, who holds mango, plantain, jack-fruit, sugarcane and sweets in his hands and who is brilliant like the rising sun.”

Sri Baala Ganapathi represents that aspect of divine power that makes even the deserts fertile and reinforces human intelligence. His complexion has the crimson tinge of the rising sun.



SRI THARUNA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री तरुणगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशांकुशा-पूप-कपित्थ जम्बू
स्वदन्त-शाली-क्षु-मपि स्वहस्तै ।
धत्ते सदा यस्तरुणाभकान्तिः
पायात् स युष्मान् तरुणो गणेशः ॥

Meditation on Sri Tharuna Ganapathi

*Paasaamkusaa-poopa kapithdha jamboo
Swadantha-shaalee kshu mapi swahasthai
Dhaththe sadaa yastharunaabhakaanthih
Paayaath sa yushmaan Tharuno-Ganeshah*

“May Sri Tharuna Ganapathi, who has the youthful lustre of the morning sun, holding the noose, hook, rice-cake, guava fruit, rose apple, broken tusk, corn ears and sugarcane bless and protect you all.”

Tharuna Ganapathi has a complexion of brilliant crimson.



SRI BHAKTHA GANAPATHI

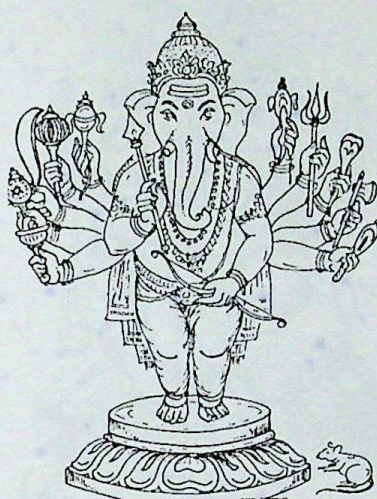
॥ श्री भक्तगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

नारिकेलाम्र कदली गुड पायस धारिणम् ।
शरत्-चन्द्राभ-वपुषं भजे भक्त-गणाधिपम् ॥

Meditation on Sri Bhaktha Ganapathi

*Naarikealaamra kadalee guda paayasa dhaarinam
Sharath-chandraabha vapusham bhaje Bhaktha-
Ganaadhipam*

Obeisance to Sri Bhaktha Ganapathi, who holds coconut, mango, plantain, jaggery, *paayasam* and who is splendidly white like the autumn moon.



SRI VEERA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री वीरगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

भेताल-शक्ति-शर-कामुक-चक्र-खड्ग
खट्वांग-मुद्गर-गदांकुश-नागपाशान्
शूलं च-कुन्त-परशू-ज्वलमुद्वहन्तं
वीरं गणेशमरुणं सततं स्मरामि ॥

Meditation on Sri Veera Ganapathi

*Bethaala-shakthi shara kaarmuka chakra khadga
Khadvaamga mudgara gadaamkusha naagapaashaan
Shoolam cha kuntha parashoo jwalamudvahantham
Veeram Ganeshamarunam sathatham smaraami*

"I always remeber Sri Veera Ganapathi, who is armed with the terrible power *Bethaala*, arrow, bow, wheel, sword, club, hammer, mace, the serpent-noose *naaga paasha*, spear, plough and a splendid axe." His colour is deep crimson. He punishes the evil and protects the good.



SRI SHAKTHI GANAPATHI

॥ श्री शक्तिगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

आलींग्य देवीं हरितांगयां
परस्पराश्लिष्ट-कटिप्रदेश
सन्ध्यारुणं पाशश्रुणी वहन्तं
भयापहं शक्तिगणेशमीडे ॥

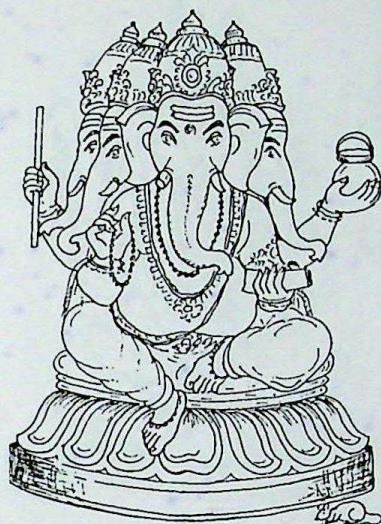
Meditation on Sri Shakthi Ganapathi

*Aalingya deveem, harithaamgayaam
Parasparaashlishta kadipradesha
Sandhyaarunam paasharunee vahantham
Bhayaapaham Shakthi-Ganeshameede*

“I worship Sri Shakthi Ganapathi, who is warmly embracing the green-hued Goddess, who shines with the splendour of the setting sun and holds noose and rod in his hands.”

He is the destroyer of fear. His colour is vermillion.

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri



SRI DWIJA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री द्विजगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

यं पुस्तकाक्ष-गुणदण्ड-कमण्डलु श्री -
विद्योतमान-करभूषण-मिन्दु वर्णम् ।
स्तम्बेरमानन-चतुष्टय शोभमानं
त्वां य स्मरेद् द्विजगणाधिपते स धन्यः ॥

Meditation on Sri Dwija Ganapathi

Yam pusthakaaksha gunadanda kamandalu shree
vidhyothamaana karabhoooshana-mindu varnam
sthamberamaanana chathushtaya shobhamaanam
Tvaam ya smare Dwija-Ganaadhipathe sa dhanyah

He who remembers Thee, Sri Dwija Ganapathi, holding the book, rosary, staff and the water-bowl *kamandalu*, in Thy hands, and who shines like the brilliant white moon, is blessed indeed. Sri Dwija Ganapathi is also known as Dwaja Ganapathi. He is depicted to have four faces.



SRI SIDDHI GANAPATHI

॥ श्री सिद्धिगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पक्वचूतफल पुष्पमञ्जरी -
रिक्षुदंड-तिलमोदकैः सह ।
उद्वहन् परशु-मस्तु ते नमः
श्री-समृद्धि-युत हेमपिंगल ॥

Meditation on Sri Siddhi Ganapathi

*Pakvachoothaphala pushpamanjaree
rikshudamda thilamodakaih saha
udvahan parashu masthu the namah
Shree samridhi-yutha hemapingala*

Obeisance to Thee O golden-hued Siddhi Ganapathi who is accompanied by wealth and prosperity and who holds a rope, mango, staff, flowers, sugarcane, sesame seeds, sweets and axe in Thy hands."

He is the promoter of prosperity in land and human life. As he is golden-hued he is also known as Pingala Ganapathi.



SRI UCHCHISHTA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री उच्छिष्टगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

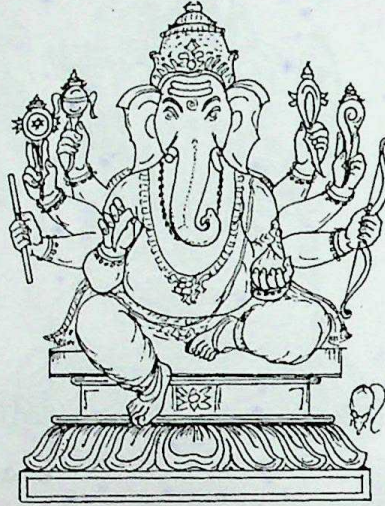
नीलाब्ज-दाडिमी-वीणा शालीपुञ्चाक्षसूत्रकः ।
दधद्-उच्छिष्ट-नामायं गणेशः पातु मेचकः ॥

Meditation on Sri Uchchishta Ganapathi

*Neelaabja daadimee veenaa
shaaleepunchaakshasoothrakah
Dadhad Uchchishta naamaayam
Ganeshah paathu mechakah*

“May the blue-hued Uchchishta Ganapathi, who holds a deep-blue lotus, pomegranate fruit, the musical instrument veena, corn ears and rosary in His hands protect us.”

He is blue in complexion.



SRI VIGHNARAAJA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री विघ्नराजगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

शंखे-क्षु-चाप-कुसुमेषु-कुठार-पाश-
चक्रःस्वदन्त-श्रुणि-मञ्जरि-काशराद्यैः ।
पाणिश्रुतैः परिसमीहित-भूषणश्रीः
विघ्नेश्वरो विजयते तपनीयसारः ॥

Meditation on Sri Vighnaraaja Ganapathi

Shamkhekshu chaapa kusumeshu kudaara paasha
Chakrah swadantha shruni manjari kaasharaadhyaih
Paanishrutaih parisameehitha bhooshanashreeh
Vighneshwaro vijayathe thapaneeeyasaarah

“Sri Vighneshwara is ever victorious, who is adorned with conch, sugarcane, bow, flower, dagger, rope, wheel, tusk, hook, bunch of tender leaves and *dharbha* grass in his hands. He is the very essence of all lights.”

He has a golden complexion.

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri



SRI KSHIPRA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री क्षिप्रगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

दन्तकल्पलता-पाश रत्नकुम्भं-शुको-ज्वलम् ।
बन्धूक-कमनीयाभम् ध्यायेत् क्षिप्रगणाधिपम् ॥

Meditation on Sri Kshipra Ganapathi

*Dantha kalpalathaa paasha
rathnakumbham-shuko-jwalam-
Bandhooka-kamaneeyaabham
Dhyaaeth Kshipra Ganaadhipam*

“I meditate on Kshipra Ganapathi, who holds the tusk, the wish-yielding creeper, noose, pot of jewels, hook, and who is effulgent like the red *bhandhooka* flower.”

He symbolises the quickly pleasing disposition of Sri Ganesha. His colour is crimson.



SRI HERAMBA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री हेरम्बगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

अभय-वरद-हस्तः पाश-दन्ता-क्षमाला
श्रुणि-परशु-दधानो मुद्गरं मोदकं च ।
फल-मधिगतसिंहः पञ्चमातंग वक्त्रो
गणपतिरतिगौरः पातु हेरम्ब नाम ॥

Meditation on Sri Heramba Ganapathi

*Abhaya varada hastah paasha danthaakshamaalaa
Shruni parashu dadhaano mudgaram modakam cha
Phala-madhigathasimhah panchamaathamga vakthro
Ganapathirathigaurah paathu Heramba naama*

“May Sri Heramba Ganapathi protect us, whose two hands express the mystic signs of *abhaya* (freedom from fear) and *abheeshta* (life's fulfillment), and the other hands holding the noose, tusk, rosary, hook, axe, hammer, sweets and fruits, who rides a lion, who has five faces and who is snow-white in complexion.”

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SRI LAKSHMEE GANAPATHI

॥ श्री लक्ष्मीगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

विभ्राण-श्शुक-बीजपूरकमिल-न्माणिक्य-कुम्भांशुकान्
पाशं कल्पलतां च खड्ग-विलसत ज्योतिः सुधा-निर्जरः ।
श्यामेनात्र सरोरुहेण सहितं देवी-द्वयं चा-न्तिके
गौरांगो-रव-नाद-हस्ति-निहितो लक्ष्मी-गणेशेऽवतात्

Meditation on Sri Lakshmee Ganapathi

*Bibraanash-shuka-beejapoorakamilan-maamikya kumbhaamshukaan
Paasham kalpalathaam cha khadga vilasath jyothi sudhaa nirjjarah
Shyaamenaathra saroruhena sahiitham deveshyam chaanthike
Gauraamgo rava naada hasthi nihiitho Lakshmee-Ganeshe avathaath*

“May Sri Lakshmee Ganesha, who is holding a parrot, apple, brilliant jewel pot, noose, wish-yeilding creeper, sword and causes a flow of enlightening nectar, attended by two Goddesses bearing blue lotuses on both sides, who is snow-white in colour and who is engrossed in the trumpet sound of the elephant, protect us.”



SRI MAHAA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री महागणपति ध्यानम् ॥

हस्तीन्द्रनान-मिन्दुचूड-मरुणच्छायं त्रिनेत्रं रसात्
आश्लिष्टं प्रियया स पद्मकरया स्वान्तस्थाया संस्थितम् ।
बीजापूरक-देक्षु-कार्मुक-लसत् चक्रा-ब्ज-पाशो-त्पल
व्रीह्याग्र-स्वविषाण-रत्नकलशान् हस्तै-र्वहन्तं भजे ॥

Meditation on Sri Mahaa Ganapathi

*Hastheendranaana-minduchooda-marunachchaayam-thrinethram rasaath
Aaslishtam priyayaa sa padmakarayaa swaanthasthayaa samsthitham
Beejaapooraka-dekshu kaarmuka-lasath chakraabja paashothpala
Vreehyaagra swavishaana rathnakalashaan hasthai vahantham bhaje*

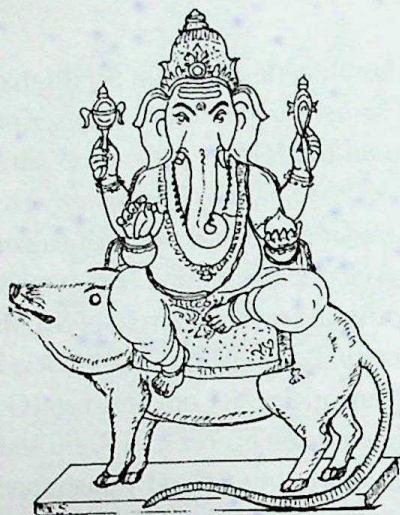
I Worship Sri Mahaa Ganapathi, with the face of the divine elephant, with crescent-decked crown, red in complexion, three-eyed, embracing His beloved consort who is holding a lotus in Her hand, and who ever resides in His heart, Him who holds pomegranate, sugarcane, bow, discus, lotus, noose, lilies, paddy, corn ears, tusk, and a pot of jewels in His hands.

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Sri Mahaa Ganapathi is accompanied by a Goddess who sits on His left side. He has eight hands holding weapons, sugarcane, paddy corn ears, flowers and other insignia. His colour is crimson.

He is elaborately described in Sri Raghava Chaithanya's book. *Mahaa Ganapathi Sthothram* - a description according to the science of *manthra*-s. He is depicted as sitting on a lion. His abode is called *Aathmaananda Bhavanam* - House of Supreme Bliss - and is surrounded by an ocean of sugarcane juice. The several Gods and Goddesses around Him symbolise the supreme oneness of all spiritual powers. In front of Sri Mahaa Ganapathi, under a *bilwa* tree sit Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. On his left side under a banyan tree sit Lord Shiva and Goddess Paarvathi and under a peepul tree on his back sit Rathi and Manmatha. On the left, under a *priyangu* tree sit God Varaaha and Goddess Earth. Sri Mahaa Ganapathi sits in the middle in unsurpassed splendour. His consort Goddess Vallabha sits on his lap. He has ten hands. In his eight hands he holds the insignia of the surrounding Deities, the lotus of Goddess Lakshmi, Vishnu's discus, Devi's noose, Shiva's trident, Rathi Devi's *utpala* flower, and Varaaha's club. In the other two hands he holds His own insignia, the broken tusk and the insignia of his consort, the pomegranate fruit.

In the midst of such colourful surroundings, Sri Mahaa Ganapathi sits in deep meditation absorbed in His own Reality. Thus, He symbolises here the Ultimate Truth, which is the Cause of everything, of every quality and every aspect. He is everything and He transcends everything. All diversities find their oneness in Sri Mahaa Ganapathi, who is with form and is formless at the same time.



SRI VIJAYA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री विजयगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशां-कुशः स्वदन्ताग्र फलवा-नाखुवाहना ।
निहन्तां सर्वविघ्नानां रक्त-वर्णो विनायकः ॥

Meditation on Sri Vijaya Ganapathi

*Paashaam-kushah swadanthaagra phalavaa-naaghuvaahana
Nihanthaam sarvavighnaanaam rakthavarno Vinaayakah.*

“Obeisance to Sri Vijaya Ganapathi, who is red-hued, who destroys all obstacles, who rides his mouse and who holds the noose, hook, tusk and fruit in his hands.”

His colour is crimson.

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri



SRI NRITHTHA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री नृत्तगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशां-कुशा-पूप-कुठार-दन्त
चंचत्-करं क्लुप्त-वरांगुलीयकम् ।
पीतप्रभं-कुक्षिः करस्थ-दन्तं
भजामि नृत्तोपपदं गणेशम् ॥

Meditation on Sri Nriththa Ganapathi

*Paashaamkushaa poopa kudaara dantha
Chamchath karam kluptha varaamguleeyakam
Peethaprabham kukshih karastha dantham
Bhajaami nriththopapadam Ganesham*

I worship Sri Ganesha, who is dancing and who is holding in his hands the noose, hook, sweet cake, dagger and tusk, who wears divine rings in His delicate fingers, whose hands sway (while dancing), who bears the broken tusk and whose belly shines with a golden hue.



SRI UDHWA GANAPATHI

॥ श्री उद्वगणपति ध्यानम् ॥

कल्हार-शालि-कमले-क्षुक-चाप-बाण
दन्त-प्ररोहक-गदी कनकोज्ज्वलाङ्गः ।
अलिङ्ग-नोद्यत-करो हरिताङ्ग-यष्ट्या
देव्याः करोतु शुभ-मुद्वगणाधिपो मे ॥

Meditation on Sri Udhwa Ganapathi

*Kalhaar-shaali kamale-kshuka chaapa baana
Dantha prarohaka gadee kanakojvalaangah
Aalimganodyatha karo harithaamga-yashtyaa
Devyaah karothu shubha-mudva-Ganaadhipo me*

May Sri Udhwa Ganapathi, who holds *kalhara* flowers, corn ear, lotus, sugarcane, bow and arrow, tusk, tender grass sprout, and mace, whose body shines like gold, who lifts His hand to embrace the green-hued Goddess, bring me auspiciousness.

Among the other aspects of Sri Ganesha are:

Sri Sankatahara Ganapathi (also known as Sankashta Harana Ganapathi)

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As the name indicates, the grace of Sri Sankatahara Ganapathi removes pain and suffering. His *dhyaana sloka* is :

॥ श्री संकष्टहरण गणपति ध्यानम् ॥

बालार्कारुण-कान्तिर्वामे बालं वहन्नं के ।
लसत् इन्दीवर-हस्तां गौरीं सद्-रत्न शोभाद् याम् ॥
दक्षे-अंकुश-वर पाणिं वामे पाशं च पायसं पात्रम् ।
नीलांकुश संपन्नः पीठे पद्मारुणो तिष्ठन् ।
संकष्ट-हरणद् रक्षः पायात् संकष्ट पूजया तुष्टः ॥

Meditation on Sri Sankashta-harana Ganapathi

*Baalaarkaaruṇa kaanthirvāme baalam vahannam ke
Lasath indeevāra hasthaam Gaureem sad rathna shobhaat yaam.
Dakshe amkusha vara paanim vāme paasham cha paayasam paathram
Neelaamkusha sampannah peede padmaarūṇo thishtan
Sankashta haranad rakshah paayaath samkashta poojayaa thushtah.*

“May Sri Samkashta Ganapathi who shines like the rising sun, with the lotus-holding, jewel-decked, beautiful Goddess on His lap, His right hands holdings the hook and expressing the *abheeshta mudra*, the boon-yielding sign, and the left hands bearing the noose and a pot of *paayasam*, and is seated on a red lotus, wearing blue clothes and who always removes the sorrows of the devout, be pleased by our *Sankashta-hara* worship and protect us.”

Rina Mochaka Ganapathi liberates the devotees from debts and liabilities. His *dhyaana sloka* is :

॥ श्री ऋणमोचक गणपति ध्यानम् ॥

पाशां-कुशौ दन्त जम्ब्वे दधानः स्फटिक प्रभः ।
रक्तं-शुको गणपतिः मुदे स्याद् ऋणमोचकः ॥

Meditation on Sri Rinamochaka Ganapathi

*Paasaamkusou dantha jambai dadhaanah spatika prabhah
Raktham shukoo Ganapathih mude syaad rinamochakah.*

“May Lord Rinamochaka Ganapathi, who holds the noose,

hook, tusk and rose apple, who shines like a crystal, and who adorns red clothes liberate us from all our debts and bestow happiness to us."

Sri Dundi Ganapathi holds a rosary in one of his hands suggesting the need of psychological disciplines to tune up the mind to higher harmony of the universe. There are famous temples of Sri Dundi Ganapathi in Kasi in the north and in Tiruchandur in the south. Tradition has it that Sri Aadi Sankaracharya composed his renowned hymn, *Sri Ganesha Pancharathna Sthothram*, while on a visit to the temple in Tiruchandur.

Vara Ganapathi has a quickly pleasing disposition. He has light red complexion and three eyes. His head is described to be full of sweetest nectar. This concept symbolises the sweetness of the transcendental bliss man experiences, when *Kundalini* energy unites with Supreme Consciousness and the conditioned human consciousness blooms as the infinite Reality - a transformation, which is figuratively described as blooming of a thousand-petalled lotus.

Sri Simha Ganapathi holds in one hand a ferocious lion and in another hand the musical instrument, Veena! This symbolises the highly terror-striking and the most benign aspects of Nature and conveys the idea that man has the freedom to attune himself with the sublime harmony of Nature.

Sri Eekaakshara Ganapathi represents the special creative aspects of *Pranavam* ॐ which gives rise to the various individual (apparently fragmented) manifestations of the universe. *Pranavam* has two aspects : *Samashti Pranavam* and *Vyashti Pranavam*. The first is the all-encompassing creative vibrant state, the one that transcends all individual attributes. The second is the vibrant aspect that causes the individual attributes and variety.

The first, the *Samashti Pranavam*, is the subtlest vibrant manifestation of Brahman. This aspect of Sri Ganesha is stated to

have the colour, *sashi-varnam*, the pure whiteness of the full Moon. Eekaakshara Ganapathi (means, the single-syllabled Ganesha) represents the *Vyashiti Pranavam*. He has the crimson colour of the rising sun. Thus, from pure whiteness the colour changes to the redness of the rising sun, the colour which symbolises activity.

If one probes deep into such facets of India's spiritual vision, one will realise that they are not random figments of imagination, but very intelligently co-ordinated fields of knowledge. From such profound insights of the Rishi-s, earnest modern researchers may be able to evolve a more comprehensive vision of man and the universe.

The above-mentioned two aspects of *Pranavam* are also described as Sri Suddha Vidyaa Tathva Vinaayaka, who is in the nature of pure knowledge, and as Sri Kantha Rudra Kumaara Vinaayaka, who is the Lord of the material forces. The latter draws power from the former. Sri Suddha Vidyaa Thathva Vinaayaka has a still higher aspect which is Ishwara Thathva Vinaayaka, an aspect that symbolises the Supreme Brahman.

Sri Nava Shakti Vinaayaka is a special aspect of Sri Ganesha as the Lord of the nine planets. Sri Ganesha is considered as having a special influence over the planet Kethu, which has malevolent nature. Worship is offered to Sri Ganesha on the *shukla chathurthi* (the fourth day of the bright moon) to ward off the evil effects of the wrong position of Kethu.

Sri Ganeshani Among the rare forms of Sri Ganesha is his female aspect (Ganeshani), sculptured in the 64-Yogini temple in Bheraghat near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh and also in Sucheendram temple near Kanyakumari in Tamilnadu, where her form can be found on a pillar in front of the shrine of Sri Amman (Divine Mother)

A Glimpse into History Possible Pre-Vedic Origin

THE seed of the Ganesha concept might have originated in the Vedic period or even before that. It sprouted and grew and during the Puraanic period evolved to fullness and burst into bloom, spreading its fragrance, drawing popular devotion not only in India but in several other countries too.

Much before Sri Adi Shankaracharya's time, Sri Ganesha became a widely worshipped deity. There is no mention of an elephant-faced God in the Veda-s, although there is a mention of 'Ganapathi' in the opening verse of Rig Veda iii.23:

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
कवि कवीनां उपमश्रवस्तमम्
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आनः
श्रुण्वन्नूतिभिस्सीदसादनम्

*Ganaanaam thvaa Ganapathim havaamahe
kavim kaveenaam upamashravasthamam
Jyeshtharaajam brahmanaam brahmanaspatha aanah
Shrunvannoothibhisseedasadanam.*

This verse is said to be dedicated to Brihaspathi, who is considered the preceptor of the gods. He is eulogised as the Lord of all the *gana*-s, the subtle powers that give rise to the material universe of differentiated aspects. Ganapathi is also described here as the poet of the poets and the king of kings. This concept of the Veda-s have been later incorporated into the Ganesha concept.

The Veda-s, Vedaanga-s, Braahmana-s, Upanishad-s and several other philosophical and literary works that were composed just after the Vedic period do not contain benedictory verses dedicated to Sri Ganesha. However, scholars point out that it is hard to find any work later than the 12th or the 13th century, which

does not begin with an invocation of Sri Ganesha.

There is reference about a deity with an elephant's face in the Taithireeya Aaranyaka, which mentions him as Danthi - the Tusker. The *Ganapathi Gaayathri*, an invocation in the *Naraayanopanishad*, which is said to be composed around the 6th A.D., Sri Ganesha is described as Vakrathunda, that is, the one having a curved trunk.

Referring to some ancient literary works, some scholars say that the concept of a God with an elephant's head might have been existing even before the second century A.D.

It is most likely that the idea of the elephant's face might have evolved from the shape of the letter ॐ (*Pranavam*), of which Sri Ganesha, as we have noted, is considered as a figurative representation. *Pranavam* (ॐ) has the semblance of an elephant's head. It is thought-provoking that the *Pranavam* sign in Tamil also has the same resemblance. It is possible that the salient philosophical ideas which go into the figure of Sri Ganesha have originated in the Vedas, which evolved through the contemplative texts, Aaranyaka-s, finally emerging itself into a perfected symbolic form in the figure of Sri Ganesha during the Puraanic period, an age when many a profound philosophical vision took appropriately symbolic Godly forms spontaneously in the consciousness of the Rishi-s as part of a practical science of spirituality.

In some ancient texts there is mention of some malevolent powers, said to be four in number, called Vinaayaka-s, who have an evil disposition and who cause obstacles and impediments in human affairs. Some scholars would like to trace the Ganesha concept from this belief. While these malefic Vinaayaka-s are representations of the retrogressive anti-evolutionary inertia in the human psyche, Sri Ganesha represents the most positive and progressive power that removes the obstacles and the inertia and takes the human phenomenon to ever greater heights. Both these concepts are thoroughly contradictory. Vighnaraaja an appellation of Sri Ganesha, does not mean the creator of obstacles, but one

who has the mastery over obstacles. In the great hymn, *Sri Lalithaa-sahasranaama*, it is said that the Goddess created Sri Ganesha to shatter the formidable obstacle, *vighna yantra*, devised by the demon Bhandaasura, who represents the terrible power of anti-evolutionary inertia in man. Sri Ganesha symbolises a thorough positivisation of human psyche eliminating the negative trends for human evolution to ever greater heights. Sri Ganesha evidently got the appellation *Vinaayaka* as the supreme leader, representing the first creative vibration. He is the epitome of the yogic knowledge of vanquishing negative mental traits by the constant application of positive ideas.

Although some scholars think that Ganesha worship was introduced in Tamilnadu in the 7th century A.D., modern researches indicate that it has much considerable antiquity than that. (According to the view of the former scholars, Narasimhavarman, a Pallava king of Tamilnadu - 630-668 A.D - conquered Badami - Vaathaapi - in the North, and his general Paranjothi, who later came to be known by his saintly name, Siruthanda Nayanaar, brought the image of Vaathaapi Ganapathi from Badami to Tamilnadu. These scholars think that Sri Ganesha worship became popular in Tamilnadu thereafter.)

This view is countered by several facts. S. Manickavasagam points out ('The Hindu', April 10, 1994) about a rare form of Sri Ganesha in one of the oldest cave temples in South India at Pillayarpatti in Tamilnadu. An inscription there mentions a place known as 'Era-kottur', from where expert sculptors came to carve the cave temple. Researchers place the period of this inscription between the 4th and 5th century A.D. (He also cites I.K. Sarma's book *The Development of Early Saiva Art and Architecture*, which mentions about a bronze plate with a clearly recognizable version of Ganapathi found in Luriston in Western Iran dated B.C. 1200.) Siruthanda Nayanaar, the general of the above-mentioned Pallava king, sings about a Shiva temple

in Thiruvanchuzhi near Kumbakonam, a temple famous for the worship of Sri Ganesha also. In a hymn, the saint Tiru-Gnasnasambandhar (6th century) refers to Sri Vinaayaka of this shrine, which indicates that Ganesha worship was in vogue before the 7th century. Avvai, a Tamil poet of the Sangham period (around the 1st century A.D.), and also Nakkerar, another Sangham poet, had composed devotional songs, *Vinayakar-agaval*, indicating that Sri Ganesha worship was prevalent in the Sangham period.

Pre-Vedic Origin

The Ganesha theme might have a pre-Vedic origin. The resemblance of the *Pranavam* symbol in Sanskrit and Tamil, two very ancient languages, and their relation to the form of Sri Ganesha may be pointing to some unknown past, when from an all-embracing philosophical vision, the two symbols were originated. The idea might have been forgotten in the passage of time and re-emerged powerfully during the Puraanic age.

Form and Power

However, the Puraana-s undoubtedly emphasize the relation between ॐ and Sri Ganesha.

The Ganesha Thaapini Upanishad unambiguously mentions that Ganesha's form was originated from Pranavam ततश्च ॐ इति ध्वनिरभूत् । स वै गजाकारः (Thathascha ॐ ithi dvanirabhooth. Sa vai Gajaakaarah). "He has the elephant's form because of His origin from the form of the sound ॐ". Thus Sri Ganesha personifies both the content and form of ॐ.

Like the sublime line of a masterly poem blooming in the mind of a gifted poet, like the sudden emergence of a scientific idea in the mind of a scientist, the archetypal symbols of the aspects of Truth arise in the mind of seers. Sri Ganesha is such a significant theme vibrant with the power of the Divine.

It is a highly meaningful form representing the dynamic divine aspect of Brahman - a form potent with spiritual power

revealed by the super-consciousness of the great Rishi-s. In the consciousness of those who have cultivated their faculties of intuition there occur spontaneous emergence of knowledge and symbolic forms of that knowledge. Forms can have profound content and power. (In some hymns Lord Ganesha is worshipped with form and without form.)

An observer can recognize that in Nature forms and functions are intimately related. To help activate the obstacle-removing faculty of Divine Consciousness within and without and to have an access to the higher realms of spiritual power, the worship of Lord Ganesha's form forms an effective medium to initiate the Power into action.

It is the feeble and primeval protoplasmic throb that eventually evolved into an elephant having immense physical strength. And *Pranavam*, the subtlest creative vibration, is the source of the material world and the seed of life, protoplasm, which eventually emerged. *Pranavam* is represented by the symbol ॐ, which has a remarkable semblance to the head of an elephant. Thus the *Pranavam* represents both the subtlest Power of the Divine and the immense material power originated from it, as symbolized by the shape of an elephant's head. (The shape of the figure ॐ the crescent and the dot, etc., are all potent with profound meaning. Further exposition of it is not in the scope of this book.) Thus *Pranavam* is potent with both active Divine Power and active material energy. As Sri Ganesha's form is a figurative representation of *Pranavam*, the invocation through that form activates both, helping to remove material impediments and bestows the Divine Grace. Sri Ganesha is depicted as the Presiding Deity of the *Moolaadhaara-chakra* in the lowest region of the spinal cord, where spiritual energy lies in a dormant state, and which is depicted as the threshold where the material energy is transformed into Divine Energy. Therefore, Sri Ganesha is considered to be the Lord of all material energy.

The Science of Manthra and Sri Ganesha

Thus the seers co-ordinated this profound divine theme with the system of *manthra*, which is the applied science of spirituality.

The science of *manthra* deals with the power fields of the spiritual energy *Kundalini* in the human system, and the *Praana* energy in the background of the universe and their interconnections. The various power-aspects of *Kundalini* energy are represented by the 51 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet which are shown on the petals of the lotuses that symbolise the six subtle energy centres along the cerebro-spinal system. This science, which emerged from the illumined consciousness of seers, is capable of evolving the human system to express the higher stages of consciousness, lifting mankind to greater vistas of civilization. Yet, like the physical sciences, this science of subtler powers can also be misused, which will bring havoc not only upon whom it is used but also eventually on the user himself, as any misuse is contrary to *Dharma* higher laws of Nature's harmony.

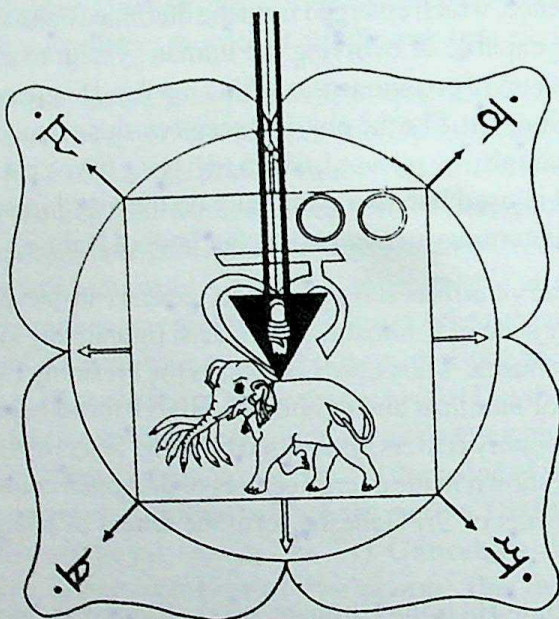
The *manthra* science has its genesis in the primordial vibratory state of Brahman, ॐ, which is, figuratively symbolised by Sri Ganesha. Thus Lord Ganesha is the Presiding Deity of the science of *manthra* and evolution. His 51 forms represent the subtle vibratory powers symbolised by the 51 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet shown in the energy centres of the spinal column. Thus the 51 forms of Sri Ganesha form the letters of a language of Reality.

While He is the Ultimate, symbolised by ॐ, He is, as we have noted, the Presiding Deity of *Moolaadhaara*, the seat of *Kundalini*, and thus the guiding power of human evolution. He is extolled in the prayer:

गुदाद् द्वयङ्गुलमूर्ध्वं तु लिङ्गादेकाङ्गुलादयः ।
मूलाधारस्त्रिकोणाभं चतुर्दलसरोरुहम् ॥
व-श-ष-साक्षरे युक्तं लसदोङ्कारकर्णिकम् ।
तत्रस्थं वल्लभीरम्यं गणेश्वरमुपास्महे ॥

*Gudaad dwayamgulamoordvam thu lingaadekaamgagulaadayah
Moolaadhaarasthrikonabham chathurdala saroruham
va-sha-shsha-saakshare yuktham lasadomkaarakarnikam
Thathrastham Vallabheeramyam Ganeshwaramupaasmahe.*

“I meditate upon Sri Ganesha, who pleases his consort and is seated within the Pranava-pericarped four-petalled lotus, the four petals inscribed with the four letters Va-Sha-Shsha and Sa, in the triangle of Moolaadhaara in the spinal column, near the anus and the genitals.”



The Moolaadhara Chakra

As the Lord of the Moolaadhaara Chakra, in the lowest part of the spinal column, Sri Ganesha is also the Lord of the lowest stage of manifestation, the earth principle. Thus He is the spiritual power that prompts consciousness locked in earth to express its greater dimensions through living

beings, and at the human stage He inspires the *Kundalini* energy to help expand consciousness to its highest dimension. This aspect of Lord Ganesha as the Lord of the *Moolaadhaara Chakra* is enshrined in the Moolaadhaara Temple at Tiruvarur in Tamilnadu.

And in his highest aspect, Sri Ganesha is the Lord of the *Sahasraara Padma*, the Thousand-Petalled Lotus, the ultimate stage of expression of Supreme consciousness, in the human brain. He is thus both the way and the goal. This ultimate aspect of Sri Ganesha is symbolised in a temple on the top of a hill in Tiruchi, also in Tamilnadu. This temple is known as the temple of Uchchi Pillayar - Lord Ganesha in his most supreme aspect.

The Rishi-s remind us that all these forms of Sri Ganesha are letters of a Form-Power alphabet of a language which helps us realise our spiritual Reality, which is not conditioned by any form, and the supreme Source of all forms

Sri Aadi Shankaracharya, in his superb hymn, *Sri Ganesha Bhujangam*, extols Sri Ganesha as that Reality.

यमेकाक्षरं निर्मलं निर्विकल्पं
गुणातीतमानन्दमाकारशून्यम् ।
परं पारमोङ्कारमाम्नायगर्भं
वदन्ति प्रगल्भं पुराणं तमीडे ॥

Yamekaaksharam nirmalam nirvikalpam
Gunaatheetha-maananda-maakaara-shoonyam
Param Paara-momkaara-maamnaaya-garbham
Vadanthi pragalbham puraanam thameede.

“To him, whom the great savants disclose as the supreme single-syllabled Sound, stainless, unconditioned, transcending the qualities, blissful, formless, the transcendental, the furtherest beyond, the ॐ, the very essence of the sacred texts - to that Primeval One I offer my adoration.”

The Manthra-s for Invocation

There are *manthra-s* and hymns in several Puraana-s to invoke the spiritual power of Sri Ganesha. Some of the *manthra-s* are given below. The hymns, *Sri Ganeshashthavam*, *Sri Ganesha-Pancharatna-Sthothram* and *Sree Vinaayaka Asthothara Sathanaamaavali* are given in the end.

ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः

Om Shree Ganeshaaya Namah

ॐ श्री महागणपतये नमः

Om Shree Mahaa Ganapathaye Namah

ॐ गं गणपतये नमः

Om Gam Ganapathaye Namah

ॐ श्री विनायकाय नमः

Om Shree Vinaayakaaya Namah

Japa and Ritualistic Worship

Japa, the contemplative repetition of a sacred Name or a group of words that express adoration for the Divine, or a hymn, is a very effective means to open the subtle channels of communication with the power fields of our greater reality. Sincere perseverance in *japa* gradually settles the turbulent waves of the mind, enables one's consciousness to get a control over oneself, and bring one in attunement with the sublime harmony of the universe. Many pestering doubts get cleared by themselves. The worshipper experiences an unseen loving Presence guiding and protecting him. Obstacles prove less formidable; the small voice within that struggles to show the right path becomes effectively audible and a Grace reveals the glorious Truth behind the transitoriness of the universe. By refining the texture of the mind, *japa* takes one to the threshold of Reality. Lord Krishna declares in the Bhagavad-gita that among the self-purifying disciplines *japa* is He Himself: *Yajnaannam japa-vaiyasni*.

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Ritualistic worship is also an effective means for the communion with Reality. Elaborate modes of ritualistic worship have been prescribed by the sages to aid the mind, senses and body to participate as one whole unit in worship. During a *pooja*, the beautiful floral offerings pleasing to the eyes, the fragrance of flowers and incense, the auspicious sound of bells and symbols and the chanting of the rhyming *manthra-s*, harmoniously elevate one's being to the higher aspects of Reality. With all the outgoing senses locked in a pleasant experience, the mind reaches out to the Infinite.

Both *japa* and ritualistic worship are expressions of longing and love for a communion with Reality. Some people talk about the meaninglessness of rituals; they forget that in Nature, the living beings have evolved certain behaviour patterns to express their love. Ritualistic worship is a manifestation of man's love for Reality. While *japa* tunes up an individual for the quest of communion, ritualistic worship makes several people to participate in it, creating an atmosphere for the communion, which even if temporary, will certainly have a lasting, ennobling influence on their minds. *Japa* and ritualistic worship activate the faculties of the divine energy *Kundalini*, sometimes bringing about miraculous effects. Ritualistic *pooja-s* in temples have an effective influence in lessening the mental tensions, which cause ailments of body and mind. They have a recharging and refreshing influence on the human system by bringing the mind in attunement with the Power Eternal, the Causeless Cause.

Worship is an effective means for the conditioned human psyche to come in contact with the all-powerful One, who is closest to every one, though, we often think, He is far away from us. Rishi-s have developed *japa* and worship as a science of spirituality and everyone can acquire this knowledge. Knowledge liberates. If *japa* and worship are done in a mood of love for (not

from fear of) the Supreme, that will certainly reinforce our inner content.

Shodashopachaara Pooja

This is an elaborate ritualistic worship with sixteen types of offerings for the Lord. The *pooja-s* will be performed to an idol or picture of the Lord decorated with flower garlands and the offerings are made along with the chanting of *manthra-s*. These sixteen rituals through which human love for the Divine is expressed are:

1. Invocation (*aavaahanam*). Then, the offering of : 2. Seat (*aasanam*), 3. Water for washing the feet (*paadyam*), 4. Water for washing the hands (*arghyam*), 5. Water for sipping (*aachamaneeyam*), 6. Bath (*snaanam*) 7. Clothes (*vasthram*) 8. The Sacred Thread (*yagnopaveetham*), 9. Fragrant anointment as sandalwood paste (*gandham*), 10. Decoration with flowers, garlands, etc. (*pushpa maalyaadi*), accompanied by chanting of *manthra-s*. This rite is known as *archana*. 11. Burning of incense (*dhoopam*), 12. Waving of light (*deepam*) 13. Offering of sweets, etc (*naivedyam*), 14. Betel leaves along with betel nuts (*thaamboolam*) 15. Burning and lighting of camphor and circumambulation (*neeraanjanam, aaraartika, pradakshinam*) and 16. Dedication by chanting of *manthra-s* (*manthra pushpaanjali*)

Such elaborate ritualistic worship is performed on special occasions like Vinaayaka Chaturthi, house-warming ceremonies, etc.

Modes of Worship

Lord Ganesha is usually worshipped in icons made of clay and stone. It suits well with the legendary theme that he was born from the mud, signifying the emergence of life-principle in active form from matter and its onward evolutionary march overcoming obstacles at every stage, towards expansion to Supreme Consciousness and absolute freedom from the conditioning limitations of matter.

Breaking the Coconut

The symbolic significance of breaking coconuts before Lord Ganesha is thought-provoking. Human intelligence is conditioned by environmental knowledge. This conditioning is like a shell which prevents and insulates the mind from gaining deeper awareness which enables consciousness to unfold its greater dimensions. It is this shell of conditioned intelligence that confines man in his selfish and egoistic pursuits and keeps him and society in a state of suffering. Man has to break this shell on the stone of spiritual inquiry. The breaking of coconut before Lord Ganesha, the Presiding Deity of evolutionary expansion, symbolises this fact.

Ganesha Chathurthi

Festivals have an important role in the cultural progress of mankind. Most of the festivals evolved in India are specially designed to bring man closer to his divine dimensions.

Ganesha Chathurthi is one such festival celebrated all over India and it integrates people in one powerful cultural sweep. The festival begins on the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the Bhaadrapada month (August-September). Ganesha idols made of clay are worshipped in homes and public places. After two days of worship the idols are immersed in rivers or in the sea.

Even in India's freedom movement, Ganesha Chathurthi festival played an important role. During a period when the British Government had banned all political meetings, Lokamanya Balagangaadhar Thilak, the great national leader, organised huge Ganesha festivals and brought millions of people together to inculcate in them an awareness of India's perennial cultural heritage and spirit of national freedom. Thus, here also this mighty symbol of evolution, the Ganesha concept, and the thirst for freedom were graciously and beneficially blended.

Ganesha Vratam

Ganesha Vratam is a special ritual and practice for propitiating and activating the spiritual power of Lord Ganesha.

It is performed to free oneself from baseless charges (made by others either purposefully or through misunderstanding) and ill-fame, to get back the lost things, to remove obstacles in an enterprise, etc. The *pooja* is performed on the fourth day of the dark fortnight. It is an elaborate propitiatory performance accompanied by rites as Shodashopachaara Pooja.

Gaanapathya-s

Gaanapathya-s are those who regard the Ganesha aspect of Reality as their chosen Deity most dear to their heart (*Ishta Devatha*) and worship Him.

The important texts of Ganapathya-s are:

1. Agni Puraanam 2. Atharva-Sikhopanisad 3. Atharva-sheershopanisad 4. Angirasa Puraanam 5. Bhavishya Puraanam 6. Brahma-Vaivartha Puraanam 7. Brahma Puraanam 8. Brahmaanda Puraanam 9. Bhavishyothara Puraanam 10. Bhaargava Puraanam (also known as Vinaayaka Puraanam) 11. Baudhayaana Grihyasesha Sootra 12. Garuda Puraanam 13. Ganapathi Upanishad 14. Ganesha Geetha 15. Ganesha Puraanam 16. Ganesha Thanthram 17. Ganesha Kalpam 18. Ganesha-chaaruchandrika 19. Heramba Puraanam 20. Heramba Upanishad 21. Linga Puraanam 22. Mudgala Puraanam 23. Naaraayanopanisad 24. Skanda Puraanam 25. Varaaha Puraanam 26. Vishnu-dharmothara Puraanam 27. Vaamana Puraanam.

The *Mahaa Siva Tanthra* describes in detail in thirty six chapters the various aspects of Ganesha worship as the *Manthradhaara vidhi*, *Yanthradhaara vidhi*, *Aachaara Vidhi*, *Poojaa Vidhi*, etc. The books like *Prapanchasaaram*, *Shaaradaathilakam*, *Shathapramodam*, *Manthra Mahodadhi*, *Manthra-mahaarnava*, etc., deal with *Ganesha Upaasana*, the practice of invoking Sri Ganesha.

The Shad-Matha-s

Hinduism includes in it diverse paths of spiritual pursuit. Sub-religions can co-exist in the all-embracing Hinduism. Sri Shankaracharya has classified these spiritual pursuits into six major paths called *Shad-matha-s*. They are 1. *Gaanapathyam* (worship of Sri Ganesha) 2. *Kaumaaram* (worship of Sri Subrahmanya) 3. *Vaishnavam* (worship of Lord Vishnu) 4. *Sauram* (worship of the Sun-God), 5. *Shaaktham* (worship of Divine Mother), 6. *Shaivism* (worship of Lord Shiva).

The followers of each path have chosen for special worship the respective aspects. They are expected to know that all aspects basically represent the same Reality. **This special aspect of Reality is their *Ishta Devatha*. This is the freedom one gets from the all-embracing character of Hinduism. One can worship any sublime concept of Reality most suited to one's psychological inclinations in the spiritual pursuit.** It is a practical philosophy that takes into consideration the diversity of human traits; and therefore does not insist on any fanatical uniformity. The goal is spiritual expansion and Self-realization, and one can choose any refining path for the purpose.

The texts on a particular Deity will extol Him/Her as the Supreme among all Deities. For example, in the Puraana-s on Lord Shiva, He will be projected as the greatest; in the Puraana-s on Lord Vishnu, He is the Supreme. In the hymns on several God-forms written by the same saint, the respective form in each hymn can be seen eulogised as the greatest. Some Puraana-s on Lord Shiva, are depicted as legends, pregnant with spiritual wisdom, told by Lord Vishnu to his consort Mahaalakshmi; Puraana-s on Lord Vishnu are presented as told by Lord Shiva to Goddess Paarvathi.

There is nothing puzzling or contradictory in such an approach; on the other hand it points to the fact that Hinduism regards all sublime paths to Reality as equally important. With this awareness one has the freedom to concentrate on any form

of his liking for his spiritual practice. Therefore, one who chooses a particular God-form as the *Ishta Devatha* for spiritual practice, can consider that form as the most important for his devoted concentration, without being fanatical about it, as he is aware of the fact that all the sublime forms essentially open the doors to the same Reality. In the Bhagavad-gita this truth is made very clear: "*In whatever aspect you approach me, through that very aspect I reach you.*" There is no un-spiritual dogmatism; there is perfect freedom of spiritual pursuit.

Great savants have composed soul stirring hymns on different sublime aspects of God. In the great hymn on the Universal Divine Mother, *Sri Lalitha-sahasranaama-sthothram*, the Goddess is extolled in Her one thousand worshipful names. These thousand names include the synonyms of Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Lord Subrahmanya and other Deities; Likewise the *Sri Vishnu sahasranaama*, the hymn on Lord Vishnu, contains names of several Deities including that of Lord Shiva, and the *Sri Shiva-sahasranaama* includes Lord Vishnu's name and the names of other godly forms. Thus through diversity one is made aware of the Oneness of Reality, keeping one off from being fanatical and maintaining the mind open and free.

Pancha Ganapathi Pooja

This is a special *pooja* festival invoking the five-faced Lord Ganesha. This festival is getting very popular, especially in the houses of Indians residing abroad. The festival lasts for five days beginning from the 21st December to the 25th December. An icon of the five-faced Lord Ganesha made of wood or bronze or a picture of Ganesha is worshipped in which the family members and friends will participate. The five-day *pooja* is marked by the high sentiments of spiritual closeness among the family members and an outpouring of such sentiments for the welfare of all, creating a vibrant spiritual atmosphere of harmony.

The first *pooja* begins at 6 am on the 21st December and the day's emphasis of prayer will be for the harmony of all the

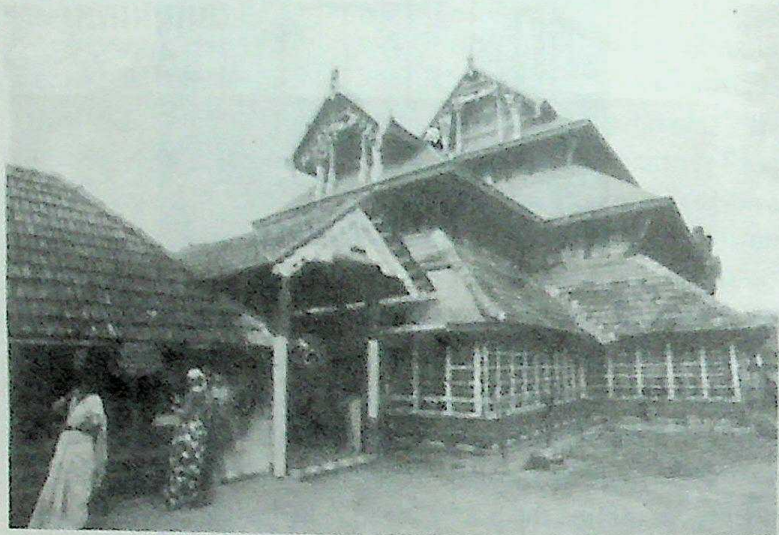


family members. The second day's *pooja* will be at 9 am and the prayers will be specially directed towards bringing spiritual closeness with neighbours, relatives and friends. The third day *pooja* will be performed at 12 noon and then a spiritual vibration of harmony and love will be directed towards all the associates in office, clients and the public at large. In the fourth day the *pooja* will be at 3 pm and the special emphasis of the day will be for the creation of a spiritual atmosphere through art forms such as music and dance. And on the fifth day, the final *pooja* will be at 6 pm and the prayers will be directed for universal harmony.

This five-day *pooja*, prayer and festival will have a very refreshing and elevating effect on the participants and they experience the outpouring of the Grace of Lord Ganesha. They experience a reassuring guidance of the Lord leading to spiritual bliss and perfection. Vibrant with such sentiments of harmony, this is very ideal festival to be adopted in every home for reinforcing life with Divine Grace.

TEMPLES OF SRI GANESHA

MOST of the temples throughout the length and breadth of India have a shrine of Sri Ganesha in their premises, or at least a niche to house the Lord the remover of all obstacles. There are also a number of temples exclusively dedicated to Sri Ganesha.



Srimadananteshwara-Vinayaka Temple, Madhur, Kerala.
The huge icon in this temple is given on page 63.

Kerala

In Kerala, the south-western State there is a well-known shrine of Sri Ganesha at Pazhavangadi, near the imposing Sri Padmanabhaswami Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the State. Everyday thousands visit this shrine, vibrant with spiritual power. Two other very popular centres of Ganesha worship in the State are Kottarakkara in south Kerala and Madhur, in the northern-most region. Both these temples are dedicated to Lord Shiva, but they are more famous for the worship Sri Ganesha,

who commands a special importance in these shrines. Srimad Anantheshwara Vinaayaka temple in Madhur, about eight kms from Kasaragod town has an enormous icon of Sri Ganesha emanating spiritual splendour and showering bountiful Grace.

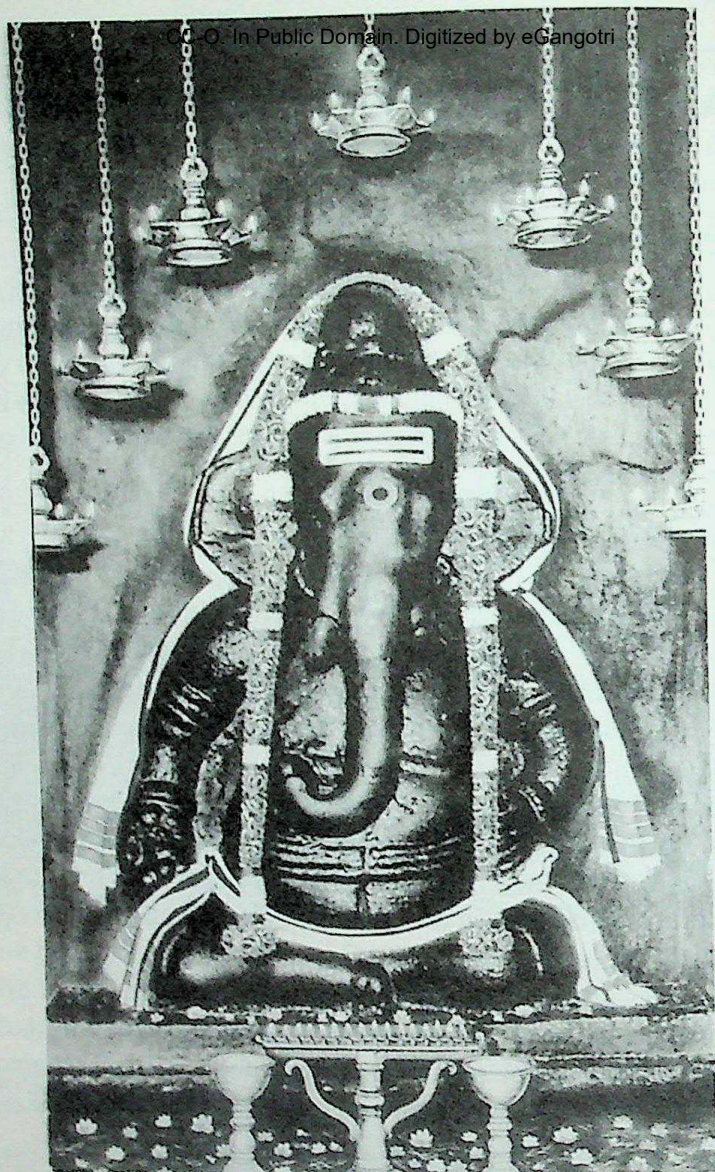
Karnataka

Saravu Sri Mahaa Ganapathi temple in Mangalore is a famous temple of Sri Ganesha in Karnataka. There is a great shrine of Sri Ganesha on a hilltop in Kumbhasi near Kundapur in Udupi district. There are innumerable shrines of Sri Ganesha in Karnataka; many of them though small in size, draw a large number of devotees everyday.

Tamilnadu

Ganesha worship is very popular in Tamilnadu. The Vinaayaka shrines in Luz Corner and in Triplicane, both in Chennai, are very popular centres of worship in the city. The Moolaadhara Temple in Tiruvarur and the Uchchi Pillayar Temple in Tiruchi are of legendary fame and well-known for their special importance, which relates them to *Kundalini*, the divine energy in the human body. There is a huge Ganesha figure in one of the oldest cave temples in southern India at Pillaiarpatti. This famous shrine is about 60 kms from Madurai. There is also an almost similar figure of Sri Ganesha renowned as Mukkuruni Vinaayakar in the temple complex in Madurai. Among the many important shrines of Sri Ganesha in Tamilnadu are in Sri Akhilandeswari temple in Tiruvanaikka, where the idol of Sri Ganesha was installed by Sri Aadi Shankaracharya, and Tiruvalanchuzhi temple near Swamimalai with a very small figurine of Sri Ganesha. This icon is known as white Vinayaka and according to legends it was created by Indra out of sea foam.

The Vinaayaka icon at Gunathalaipadi village near Kathiramangalam, Tanjore districts, believed to have been installed by sage Durvasa. Sage Agasthya consecrated a Vinaayaka idol in Ganapathi Agraharam, a village near Kumbakonam. The only separate temple probably in the whole of India for Uchchishta Ganapathi is in Sreenivasapuram in Tanjore.



Sri Ganesha icon in the cave temple
at Pillaiarpatti, Tamilnadu

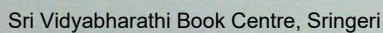
Manakulu Sri Vinaayaka Temple near Sri Aurobindo Ashram
is a very popular centre of Sri Ganesha worship in Pondicheri.

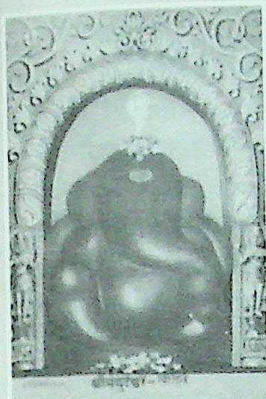
Maharashtra

Like Tamilnadu, Maharashtra is a region, where Ganesha worship is very popular. Sri Ashta-Vinaayaka temples in the State are specially famous throughout India. Situated in a range of about 150 kms from the city of Pune, these eight temples are : 1. *Sri Mayureshwar Temple of Morgaon*, on the bank of the river, Karha, 64 km from Pune, 2. *Sri Siddhivinaayaka Temple at Siddhatek*, on the bank of the river, Bhima, 101 km from Pune and 12 kms from Daud railway station, 3. *Sri Balleshwar Temple at Pali*, 110 km from Pune and 30 km from Karjat, 4. *Sri Varad Vinayaka temple at Mahad*, about 1.5 km off the main road connecting Pune to Khapoli, 5. *Sri Chintamani Temple of Theur*, on the bank of the river, Mula-Mutha, 22 km from Pune, 6. *Sri Girijatmaj temple at Lenyadri*. (It is cave temple carved out in a mountain. There are 283 steps to go upto the shrine. It is about 5 km from a place called Junner. Junner is connected by road to Pune and Talegaon (88 km) and is 230 km from Bombay. A 5-km trek on foot or by bullock-cart takes the pilgrims to the cave shrine, 7. *Sri Vigneshwar Temple at Ozar*. From Junner one can go to this temple also, 8. *Sri Mahaa Ganapathi Temple at Ranjangaon*. The temple is 50 km from Pune. In a basement below the shrine there is an idol of Sri Ganesha, which has 20 hands and 10 trunks. It is regarded as the original idol of the temple.

There are two very famous shrines of Dundi Ganapathi one in Kasi in the north (Uttar Pradesh) and the other in Tiruchendur in the south (Tamilnadu).

In all the States of India one can find idols and paintings of Sri Ganesha that reveal the diverse characteristics of this great divine theme - ranging from the unique depictions in the Ellora caves to the Vinaayaka playing a flute, like Sri Krishna, in the Sri Sailam temple in Andhra Pradesh.





SRI MAYURESHWAR



SRI SIDDHIVINAYAK



SRI BALLESHWAR



SRI VARAD VINAYAKA

Places

- Morgaon
- Siddhatek
- Pali
- Mahad
- Theur
- Lenyadri
- Ozar
- Ranjangaon



SRI CHINTAMANI



SRI GIRIJATMAJ



SRI VIGHNESHWAR



SRI MAHAAGANAPATHI

The icons in the Ashta-Vinayaka temples in Maharashtra

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

SRI GANESHA WORSHIP ABROAD

ENSHRINED in the hearts of Hindus, Buddhists and Jains, Sri Ganesha and his worship became popular almost all over Asia. Through Buddhism, Ganesha worship spread to several countries.

Afganistan

A fine example of Indo-Gaandhara school of art, a sculpture of Ganesha made of marble, 60 cms high and 35 cms broad, was found at Gardez in Afganistan. An inscription found on its pedestal states: "This great and beautiful Mahaa Vinayaka was consecrated by the renowned Shaahi king, the illustrious Shaahi Khingala, who was *Parama-bhattaaraka Mahaa raaajaadhiraaja* in the eighth year of his reign, in the *mahaa-Jyeshtha maasa, shuklapaksha, trayodashi, Vishaakha nakshathra and Simhala laghna*." This sculpture which is said to be of the 6th century A.D., indicates the popularity of Sri Ganesha worship in ancient times in the present-day Afganistan.

Nepal

Worship of Sri Ganesha is very popular among Hindus and Buddhists in Nepal. Heramba Ganapathi is the most popular form of worship. This form of Sri Ganesha with five faces and with ten hands is depicted with his mount as a lion and Goddess Shakthi in his lap. A bronze statue taken from Nepal and exhibited in the Museum fur Volkerkunde in Munich shows a rat under one foot and a lion under the other.

Tibet

In Tibet Sri Ganesha is worshipped as a powerful guardian against demons and evil spirits. His image is placed above the main entrance in many Buddhist temples.

Mongolia

Through Buddhism, Ganesha worship spread to Mongolia and it became very popular in the 13th century A.D. In a sculpture in Mongolia, Ganesha is depicted on his rat mount, which holds a wish-yielding jewel *Chintamani* in its mouth. The four hands hold, each an axe (*parashu*), a tuberous root (*moola-kanda*), bowl of sweets and a trident (*trishoola*).

Ceylon

There is a fine sculpture of Sri Ganesha in the Shiva temple at Polonnaruwa. Sri Ganesha is worshipped in a separate shrine in the temple of Sri Subrahmanya at Katirgama, where people, irrespective of their religious affiliations, come to worship Sri Ganesha.

Burma

In the indigenous religious concept of Burma, Sri Ganesha became popular and came to be known as *Mahaapienne*. In a Ganesha image recovered from the debris of the ruins of a temple in Pagan, there was a unique form of Sri Ganesha seated in *Padmaasana*. In this figure with four hands, the upper right hand holds an axe and lower right, a rosary; the upper left hand a conch and the lower left hand is placed on his lap.

Thailand

In the early centuries of the Christian era, Hinduism was the popular religion in the southern parts of Thailand, when Ganesha worship was a part of the religious life there.

However, later when the people became Buddhists, the worship of Sri Ganesha continued, as he was popular among the Buddhists also. In the renowned Hindu temple in Bangkok, a bronze statue of Sri Ganesha shows him wearing a *Nagayajnopaveetha*. His right hand holds the broken tusk and the left hand, a manuscript.

Cambodia

In Cambodia also Hinduism was prevalent in the early centuries of Christian Era. A number of Ganesha images have been recovered. Scholars mention about a temple of the 10th century, dedicated to Sri Ganesha at Prasatt Bak. A simple statue, cross-legged without any ornaments, with only two hands and with a third eye on the forehead, was discovered at Thurol Phak Kim Kanda.

Java

There are evidences to believe that even before the Christian era, India had contacts with Java. Various types of Ganesha statues discovered in Java, show the different stages of iconography developed there.



From left: Ganesha sculptures in Cambodia, Bali and Japan

Bali

Ganesha worship is very popular in Bali, where Hindu culture and Sanskrit study are still in vogue. Many of the Ganesha images in Bali depict Sri Ganesha in a standing posture and with a third eye.

Borneo

From several ancient records, it is presumed that Hinduism was prevalent in Borneo even before the 5th century. Among the several images discovered in a cave at Kombeng there was a fine stone statue of Ganesha with four hands.

China

A fresco in the rock-cut caves at Tun-huang and a stone image carved in the rock-cut temple at Kung-hsien and other evidences indicate the prevalence of Ganesha worship in China as early as the 5th century A.D.

Japan

Ganesha worship became very popular in Japan from the 9th century A.D., when His worship was introduced by Kolso Daisi, a Buddhist. Images, mostly standing, with two, four or six arms and with a smiling countenance were sculptured and special temples were built for the worship of Sri Ganesha. There is also a unique double-form Ganesha in which two Ganesha forms, male and female aspects, are shown embracing each other. The figure is not usually worshipped in temples. Meditation upon this figure, which is considered to have a deep yogic significance, has become part of a personal spiritual discipline both in Japan and China.

SRI GANESHA STHOTHRA-S

MODERN society is in a puzzling 'inner conflict'. It has lost touch with something vital and ennobling. Strife, hatred and ill-will pester human life in several countries. Even in affluent and technically advanced nations, life is turning to be a nightmare of stress and anxiety. In our highly technological age, man does such atrocious acts, which even ferocious animals abhor to do. Our 'advanced times' remind us of the prophetic words of the *Swetashvathaara Upanishad*: "Even if men may roll up the sky like a piece of leather, there will be no end of sorrow for him without realising the Effulgent One within."

Many psychologists today emphasise the necessity of modern man to 'discover the life of the Spirit' - that 'something within' which cures human ills and brings harmony to life. The real well-being and progress of society lies in the effort of the individual to strengthen his inner life.

When the human mind is channeled in a positive direction it will brighten life, bringing material and spiritual progress. For this the *Sthothra-s* - hymns in praise of the Divine - are very helpful. They are pregnant with powerful suggestions of strength and harmony in the form of praise for the powers and glory of the Divine, which is, in fact, our very Essence. When these hymns are repeated with devotion - which is the conditioned mind's freedom-obtaining submission to the unconditioned Reality - their subtle suggestions seep into the human depths invoking the Divine Power.

Sthothra-s harmonise us with the power of God. This harmony is the basic necessity for successful living. Prayer to Lord Ganesha, who is the personification of the Infinite Power within, helps to remove all obstacles from the path of life and inspires its evolution to higher stages of freedom.

There are several hymns to invoke the blessings of Sri

Sri Vidya Bharati Book Centre, Sringeri

Ganesha. Here we include *Sri Ganesha-sthavam*, which adores Sri Ganesha as the Supreme, *Sri Mahaa Ganesha Pancharathnam* by Sri Aadi Shankaracharya and *Sri Vinayaka Ashtothara-Sathanaamaavali* which contains 108 highly potent mystical attributes. One can attune oneself with the benevolent power of Sri Ganesha through the earnest repetition of any such great hymn or *manthra*.

श्री गणेशस्तवम्

SRI GANESHA STHAVAM

अजं निर्विकल्पं निराकारमेकं
निरानन्दमानन्दमद्वैतपूर्णम् ।
परं निर्गुणं निर्विशेषं निरीहं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Ajam nirvikalpam niraakaaramekam
Niraanandam-aanandam-advaitapoomnam
Param nirgunam nirvishesham nireeham
Parabrahma-roopam Ganesham bhajema

O Lord, Thou art unborn, absolute and formless; Thou art beyond bliss and again bliss itself --- the One and the Infinite. Thou art the Supreme, without attributes, unconditioned and desireless. Thou art verily the Supreme Brahman. To Thee, O Lord do we offer our worship.

गुणातीतमानं चिदानन्दरूपं
चिदाभासकं सर्वगं ज्ञानगम्यम् ।
मुनिध्येयमाकाशरूपं परेशं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Gunaatheethamaanam chidaananda-roopam
Chidaabhaasakam sarvagam gnaanagamyam
Munidhyeyamaakaasharoopam paresham
Parabrahmaroopam Ganesham bhajema

Thy nature is beyond attributes. Thou art the embodiment of intelligence and bliss, the effulgent Spirit, the all pervading, the

goal of knowledge. Thou art the object of meditation to the sages, formless and omnipresent like ether. Thou art the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Brahman.

जगत्कारणं कारणज्ञानरूपं
सुरादिं सुखादिं गुणेशं गणेशम् ।
जगत् व्यापिनं विश्ववन्द्यं सुरेशं
परब्रह्मरूपं गणेशं भजेम ॥

Jagatkaaranam Kaaranajnana roopam
Suraadim Sukhaadim gunesham Ganesham
Jagathvyapinam Viswavandhyam Suresham
Parabrahma roopam Ganesham bhajema

Thou art the cause of the world, the primal knowledge, the origin of gods, the origin of bliss, the Lord of *guna*-s, the Lord of heavenly hosts. Thou art the Lord of gods. Thou art verily the Supreme Brahman. To Thee, O Lord, do we offer our worship.

English version from 'Universal Prayers' by Swami Yatiswarananda.

श्री महागणेशपञ्चरत्नं ॥

SRI MAHAA GANESHA PANCHARATHNAM

मुदा करात्तमोदकं सदा विमुक्तिसाधकं
कलाधरावतंसकं विलासिलोकरक्षकम् ।
अनायकैकनायकं विनाशितेभदैत्यकं
नताशुभाशुनाशकं नमामि तं विनायकम् ॥

Mudaakaraatha modakam sadaa vimukthisaadhakam
Kalaadharaavathamsakam vilaasilokarakshakam
Anaayakaikanaayakam vinaashithebhadaithyakam
Nathaashubhaashu naashakam namaami tham Vinaayakam

Holding with delight the sweet *Modaka* (symbolising spiritual joy), he grants always to the devout the delight of everlasting spiritual freedom. He wears the crescent, (the symbol of the cyclic nature of the universe) on his forehead. He protects those who

meditate on him. He is a matchless leader. He destroys the terrible demons of evil. He dispels the misery of those who takes refuge in Him. To Him, to Lord Vinaayaka, I bow in obeisance.

नतेतरातिभीकरं नवोदितार्कभास्वरं
नमत्सुरारिनिर्जरं नताधिकापदुद्धरम् ।
सुरेश्वरं निधीश्वरं गजेश्वरं गणेश्वरं
महेश्वरं तमाश्रये परात्परं निरन्तरम् ॥

Nathetharaathi-bheekaram navodithaarka-bhaasvaram
Namath-suraari-nirjaram nataadhikaapadudharam
Sureshvaram nidheeshvaram gajeshvaram Ganeshvaram
Maheshvaram thamaashraye paraathparam nirantharam.

He is terrible to those who do not turn to the all-pervading harmonising power of God. He is luminous like a morning sun. He is adored by both the Deva-s and the Asura-s. He saves from grave dangers. He is the Lord of the Deva-s, Lord of wealth, Lord of the elephantine forces of Nature, Lord of the subtle principles of the universe, the Lord Supreme, the One Transcendental Being. I always take refuge in Him.

समस्तलोकशंकरं निरस्तदैत्यकुञ्जरं
दरेतरोदरं वरं वरेभवक्त्रमक्षरम् ।
कृपाकरं क्षमाकरं मुदाकरं यशस्करं
मनस्करं नमस्कृतां नमस्करोमि भास्वरम् ॥

Samastha-loka shamkaram nirastha daithya-kunjaram
Daretharodaram varam varebhavakthramaksharam
Kripaakaram kshamaakaram mudaakaram yeshaskaram
Manaskaram namaskrithaam namaskaromi bhaasvaram

He brings well-being to the whole universe. He destroys the terrible evil forces. He has an all-consuming pot-belly. He is endower of boons. He is everlasting. He is bountiful. He gives joy, well-being and glory to those who worship Him. I salute this Ever Effulgent Being.

अकिंचनार्तिमार्जनं चिरन्तनोक्तिभाजनं
 पुरारिपूर्वनन्दनं सुरारिगर्वचर्वणम् ।
 प्रपञ्चनाशभीषणं धनञ्जयादिभूषणं
 कपोलदानवारणं भजे पुराणवारणम् ॥

Akimchanaarathi-maarjanam chiranthanokthi bhaajanam
 Puraaripoorva-nandanam suraari garva charvanam
 Prapanchanaasha bheeshanam Dhananjayaadi bhooshanam
 Kapoladaana-vaaranam bhaje puraana-vaaranam.

He disples ills and sufferings of the devout who constantly prays to him. He is the son of Lord Shiva who destroys the demons. He smashes the pride of the fierce demons. His terrible might can dissolve the whole universe. He is adored by the valiant men like Arjuna. The elephant-faced Lord emanates strength from his powerful countenance. To this timeless elephant-faced Lord I bow in obeisance.

नितान्तकान्तिदन्तकान्तमन्तकान्तकात्मजम्
 अचिन्त्यरूपमन्तहीनमन्तरायकृन्तनम् ।
 हृदन्तरे निरन्तरं वसन्तमेव योगिनां
 तमेकदन्तमेव तं विचिन्तयामि सन्ततम् ॥

Nithaanthakaanthi-danthakaantha-manthakaantha-kaathmajam
 Achinthyaroopam anthaheenam antharaaya-krinthanam
 Hridanthare nirantharam vasanthameva yoginaam
 Thamekadanthameva tham vichinthayaami santhatham.

He is graceful with shiny teeth. He is the son of Lord Shiva, who is the Lord of Yama, the Lord of death. His form is not conceivable by thought. He is Eternal. He is the destroyer of all miseries. He dwells always in the heart of Yogi-s. I always remember the One-Tusked Lord.

महागणेशपञ्चरत्नमादरेण योऽन्वहं
 प्रजल्पति प्रभातके हृदि स्मरन् गणेश्वरम् ।
 अरोगतामदोषतां सुसाहितीं सुपुत्रतां
 समाहितायुरष्टभूतिमभ्युपैति सोचिरात् ॥

Mahaaganesha-pancharathnam aadarayna yonvaham
 Prajalpathi prabhaathake hridi smaran Ganeshwaram
 Arogathaam-adoshathaam susaahiteem suputhrathaam
 Samaahitaayurashta-bhoothimabhyupaithi sochiraath.

Whoever chants with devotion this Pancharathna Sthothra every day in the early dawn meditating on Sri Mahaa Ganesha, will be freed from all afflictions. He will enjoy good health, have noble children, prosperity, long life, divine gifts and talents.

॥ श्री विनायक अष्टोत्तरशतनामावलि ॥

Sri Vinayaka Ashtothara Sathanaamaavali

ॐ विनायकाय नमः	Om Vinaayakaaya Namah
" विघ्नराजाय नमः	" Vighnaraajaaya Namah
" गौरीपुत्राय नमः	" Gouree Puthraaya Namah
" गणेश्वराय नमः	" Ganeshwaraaya Namah
" स्कन्दाग्रजाय नमः	" Skandaagrajaaya Namah
" अव्ययाय नमः	" Avyayaaya Namah
" पूताय नमः	" Poothaaya Namah
" दक्षाय नमः	" Dakshaaya Namah
" अध्यक्षाय नमः	" Adyakshaaya Namah
" द्विजप्रियाय नमः	" Dvijapriyaaya Namah
" अग्निगर्वच्छिदे नमः	" Aghnigarvachhide Namah
" इन्द्रश्रीप्रदायकाय नमः	" Indrashreepradaayakaya Namah
" वाणीप्रदायकाय नमः	" Vaaneepradaayakaaya Namah
" सर्वसिद्धिप्रदाय नमः	" Sarvasiddhipradaaya Namah
" शर्वतनयाय नमः	" Sharvathanayaaya Namah
" शर्वरीप्रियाय नमः	" Sharvareepriyaaya Namah
" सर्वात्मकाय नमः	" Sarvaathmakaaya Namah
" सृष्टिकत्रे नमः	" Srishtikathre Namah
" देवानीकार्चिताय नमः	" Devaaneekaarchitaaya Namah
" शिवाय नमः	" Shivaaya Namah
" सिद्धिबुद्धिप्रदाय नमः	" Siddhi-budhi pradaaya Namah
" शान्ताय नमः	" Shanthaaya Namah
" ब्रह्मचारिणे नमः	" Brahmachaarine Namah
" गजाननाय नमः	" Gajaananaaya Namah
" द्वैमातुराय नमः	" Dvaimaathuraaya Namah

" मुनिस्तुत्याय नमः	" Munishthuthyaaya Namah
" भक्तविघ्नविनाशनाय नमः	" Bhakthavighna vinaashanaaya Namah
" एकदन्ताय नमः	" Aekadanthaaya Namah
" चतुर्बाहवे नमः	" Chathurbhaahave Namah
" चतुराय नमः	" Chathuraaya Namah
" शक्तिसंयुताय नमः	" Shakthisamyuthaaya Namah
" लम्बोदराय नमः	" Lambodaraaya namah
" शूर्पकर्णाय नमः	" Shoorpakarnaaya Namah
" हरये नमः	" Haraye Namah
" ब्रह्मविदुत्तमाय नमः	" Brahmaaviduthamaaya Namah
" काव्याय नमः	" Kavyaaya Namah
" ग्रहपतये नमः	" Grahapathaye Namah
" कामिने नमः	" Kaamine Namah
" सोमसूर्याग्निलोचनाय नमः	" Somasooryaaghnilochanaaya Namah
" पाशांकुशधराय नमः	" Paashaamkushadharaaya Namah
" चण्डाय नमः	" Chandaaya Namah
" गुणातीताय नमः	" Gunaatheethaaya Namah
" निरञ्जनाय नमः	" Niranjanaaya Namah
" अकल्मषाय नमः	" Akalmashaaya Namah
" स्वयंसिद्धाय नमः	" Swayamsidhaaya Namah
" सिद्धार्चितपदाम्बुजाय नमः	" Siddhaarchithapadaambujaaya Namah
" बीजापूरफलासक्ताय नमः	" Beejaapooraphalaasakthaaya Namah
" वरदाय नमः	" Varadaaya Namah
" शाश्वताय नमः	" Shaashvathaaya Namah
" कृतिने नमः	" Krithine Namah
" रमार्चिताय नमः	" Ramaarchithaaya Namah
" वीतभयाय नमः	" Veethabhayaaya Namah
" गदिने नमः	" Gadine Namah
" चक्रिणे नमः	" Chakrine Namah
" इक्षुचापधृते नमः	" Ekshuchaapadhrithite Namah
" श्रीदाय नमः	" Shreedayaaya Namah
" दान्ताय नमः	" Daanthaaya Namah
" अजाय नमः	" Ajaaya Namah
" उत्पलकराय नमः	" Uthpalakaraaya Namah
" श्रीपतिस्तुतिर्हृषिताय नमः	" Sreepathisthuthiharshithaaya Namah
" कुलाद्रिभेत्रे नमः	" Kulaadribhethre Namah
" जटिलाय नमः	" Jatilaaya Namah

" चन्द्रचूडाय नमः	" Chandrachoodaaya Namah
" अमरेश्वराय नमः	" Amareshwaraaya Namah
" नागयज्ञोपवीतये नमः	" Naagayajnopaveethaye Namah
" कलिकल्मषनाशनाय नमः	" Kalikalmashanaashanaaya Namah
" स्थूलकण्ठाय नमः	" Sthoolakandaaya Namah
" स्वयंकर्त्रे नमः	" Swayamkartre Namah
" सामघोषप्रियाय नमः	" Saamaghoshapriyaaya Namah
" पराय नमः	" Paraaya Namah
" स्थूलतुण्डाय नमः	" Sthoolathundaaya Namah
" अग्रण्ये नमः	" Agranye Namah
" धीराय नमः	" Dheeraaya Namah
" वागीशाय नमः	" Vageeshaaya Namah
" सिद्धिदायकाय नमः	" Siddhidaayakaaya Namah
" दूर्वाविल्वप्रियाय नमः	" Doorvaavilvapriyaaya Namah
" कान्ताय नमः	" Kaanthaaya Namah
" पापहारिणे नमः	" Paapahaarine Namah
" समाहिताय नमः	" Samaahithaaya Namah
" आश्रितश्रीकराय नमः	" Aashrithashreekaraaya Namah
" सौम्याय नमः	" Soumyaaya Namah
" भक्तवाञ्छितदायकाय नमः	" Bhaktavaanchithadaayakaaya Namah
" शान्ताय नमः	" Shanthaaya Namah
" अच्युतार्च्याय नमः	" Atchuthaarchyaaya Namah
" कैवल्याय नमः	" Kaivalyaaya Namah
" सच्चिदानन्दविग्रहाय नमः	" Satchidaanandavigrahaaya Namah
" ज्ञानिने नमः	" Jnaanine Namah
" दयायुताय नमः	" Dayaayuthaaya Namah
" ब्रह्मद्वेषविवर्जिताय नमः	" Brahmadvेषavivarjithaaya Namah
" प्रमत्तदैत्यभयदाय नमः	" Pramathadaithyabhayadaaya Namah
" व्यक्तमूर्तये नमः	" Vyakthamoorthaye Namah
" अमूर्तिमते नमः	" Amoorthimathe Namah
" शैलेन्द्रतनयोत्सङ्ग- खेलनोत्सुकमानसाय नमः	" Sailendra-thanayothsanga- khelanothsukamaanasaaya Namah
" शंकरौत्सङ्गसततखेलनो- त्सुकमानसाय नमः	" Sankarouthsanga-sathatha- khelano- tsukamaanasaaya Namah
" समस्तजगदाधाराय नमः	" Samastha-jagadaadhaaraaya Namah
" मायिने नमः	" Maayine Namah
" मूषकवाहनाय नमः	" Mooshakavaahanaaya Namah

" चन्द्रचूडामणये नमः	" Chandrachoodaamanaye Namah
" कान्ताय नमः	" Kanthaaya Namah
" पापहारिणे नमः	" Paapahaarine Namah
" समाहिताय नमः	" Samaahithaaya Namah
" चिन्तामणिद्वीपपतये नमः	" Chintaamanidveepapathaye Namah
" परमात्मने नमः	" Paramaathmane Namah
" सर्वविधये नमः	" Sarvavidhaye Namah
" हृष्टाय नमः	" Hrishtaaya Namah
" तुष्टाय नमः	" Tushtaaya Namah
" प्रसन्नात्मने नमः	" Prasannaathmane Namah
" सर्वसिद्धिप्रदायकाय नमः	" Sarvasidhipradaayakaaya Namah

Sri Muthuswami Deekshithar's Compositions

The celebrated composer of Carnatic music and mystic Sri Muthuswami Deekshithar has composed more than fifty hymns on Sri Ganesha. Some of them and their metre and rhythm are:

(The star-marked compositions are on the special aspects of Sri Ganesha.)

- *1. *Mahaaganapthim* - Naatta - Aadithaalam
- *2. *Siddhivinaayakam* - Shanmukhapriya - Roopakam
- *3. *Raktha-ganapathim* - Mohanam - Aadithaalam
- *4. *Sreemoolaadhaara-chakra-ganapthe* - Sreeraagam - Aadithaalam
- *5. *Pancha-maathamgamukha-ganapathinaa* - Malahari - Roopakam
- *6. *Herambaaya* - Adaana - Roopakam
7. *Sreemahaaganapathiravathumaam* - Gaala - Mishrachaap
- *8. *Shvethaganapathi* - Raagachoodaamani - Triputa
9. *Vallabhanaayakasya* - Begada - Roopakam
10. *Gananaathena* - Aarabhi - Mishrachaap
- *11. *Uchchishta-ganapathou* - Rudrapriya - Aadithaalam
12. *Gananaayakam* - Rudrapriya - Aadithaalam

13. *Ganeshakumaara* - Chenchurutti - Chathurashra Aekathaalam
14. *Karikalabha-mukham* - Saaveri - Roopakam
15. *Mahaaganapathi* - Thoti - Roopakam
16. *Vaathaapiganapathi* - Hamsadwani - Aadithaalam
- *17. *Lambodaraaya* - Varaaji - Aadithaalam
18. *Hashtivadanaaya* - Navarong - Mishrachaap
19. *Vighneshwaram* - Malahari - Aadithaalam
20. *Sreeganeshaathparam* - Aardradeshi - Chambathaalam
21. *Mahaaganapathe* - Natanaaraayani - Aadithaalam
- *22. *Ekadhantham* - Bilahari - Mishrachaap
23. *Gajaananayatham* - chakravaakam - Aadithaalam

A New Hypothesis

This is an hypothesis sent by a reader of the last edition of the book. While the main theme in this book takes the form as a theme basically emerged in the super-consciousness of the ancient Rishi-s involving in it the Shiva-Shakthi principles causal to the evolution of the phenomenal universe and also revealing the way for man's spiritual liberation, this hypothesis presents it as a possible step by step evolution incorporating the same principles. This is included in this book to give a slightly different point of view.

THE form of Sri Ganesha puzzles many because of its strange appearance and the following legend about its origin intriguing (see page 47 for the meaning of this symbolic legend).

Once Mother Parvati decided to have a bath when Lord Shiva along with His attendants had gone for hunting. She created a boy scraping the dirt taken from Her body and asked him to stand guard while She bathed. When Lord Shiva returned, He was forcibly prevented entering the abode by the boy, who did not recognize Him. A battle ensued and Shiva chopped off the boy's head. Subsequently, Parvati came out after Her bath and seeing Her dear son dead, insisted that He should bring the boy back to life. Lord Shiva went around in search of another head and found an elephant. He brought its head, fixed it on the boy's body and revived him. The boy was accepted as their son. Thus the boy was given a new birth with an elephant's head and human torso. He was made the Lord of the *gana-s*, the subtle principles involved in the constitution of the phenomenal universe and thus became Ganapathi or Ganesha.

While reading this legend several questions would arise in one's mind. Was the Divine Mother, a symbol of snow white purity, got Herself smeared with so much dirt that She could with it sculpt the body of a boy? Could not have Lord Shiva found a more decent head for him - after all the boy's original head must have been lying around. And, why Ganesha has a huge pot belly?

But such are the many Puranic stories which leave the reader nonplused. It is only when we delve deep into the mystery which is

shrouded in such stories that we are blessed with rare spiritual insights. An analytical mind is no doubt a very potent tool, and when used with reverence and an urge to fathom the truth leads the seeker very far. Otherwise it may make one cynical.

The first clue to this mystery is that Sri Ganesha is the son of Shiva and Parvati (Shakti) . He represents their manifested form as this universe which involves both of them. How Shiva and Shakti are related to each other spiritually is a deep mystery and the following verses from Sri Dynaneshwara's *Anubhavamrut* throw some light on it.

*Duality is dissolved
in their divine union,
and again withdrawing from
one another, create duality
for pleasure.*

*Neither together
nor separate
so manifested into each other
their unity is
indescribable.*

*He is the Ground
for all her sport
And She is the Energy
for all His creation.*

*Blissful are both
in their heavenly union
Lost in each other's brilliance.
timeless, they exist*

- *The Ultimate Satori* by K.D. Joshi

Visually this relation can best be comprehended by the ancient Chinese representation of Yin and Yang, the masculine and feminine principles, which are inseparable and intimately related to each other. It is debatable whether this diagram (which is like the *Yantras* in Tantrik philosophy) was copied by the Chinese from us or vice versa.

Suffice is it to say that there was far more interaction between the ancient civilizations than is being realized now.

The diagram (Figure 1) representing Yin and Yang is a picture of simplicity and elegance and wonderfully expresses the profound and essential unity in duality. - Yin and Yang - Shiva and Shakti - Purusha and Prakriti, masculine and feminine. Both of them are fish shaped, equal in size and shape, and intimately hug each other to form the circle of existence. The elegant symmetry of the two forming the one whole circle is marvelous. No wonder it has become the icon of Chinese culture.

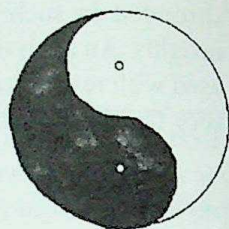


Figure 1
Yin and Yang

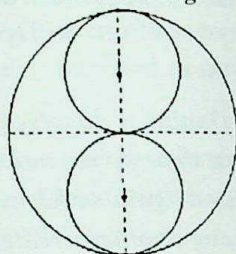


Figure 2
Geometry

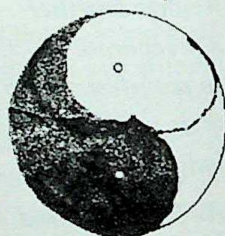


Figure 3
Omkara Superimposed

After appreciating the beauty of the diagram we should now study its geometry. (Figure 2). It will be readily seen that it contains in all three circles- two equal small circles encased in a larger circle twice their size i.e. the diameter of the small circle becomes the radius of the large circle. Then Shiva and Shakti are demarcated by joining the opposing semicircles of the smaller circles

passing through the center of the large circle. This can be done in two ways and both give the same shape with a different orientation like mirror images, which of course is not relevant to this study. The centers of the small circles form the 'eyes' of the 'fishes'. Also, any line passing through the center of the larger circle

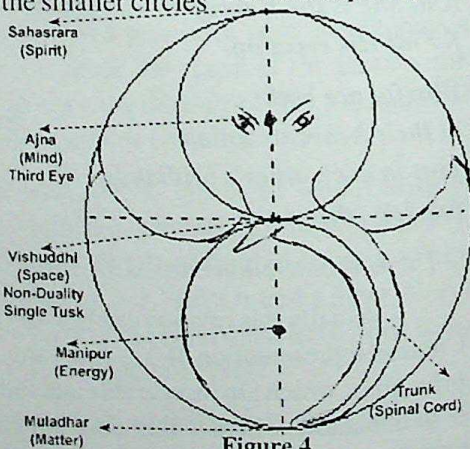


Figure 4

Yoga Significance of Sri Ganesha Icon

equal lengths (radius) in both the 'fishes', thus giving it a deep significance.

The mystic who intuited the form of Sri Ganesha - the son of Shiva and Shakti, perhaps contemplated this figure as His ideal representation. He perhaps also realized that apart from this relationship, Ganesha also represented the primordial sound AUM with which the duo projected this universe, and hence had to be included in the contemplation of His icon. We get Figure 3 when we superimpose the symbol of AUM on the Shiva-Shakti diagram.

From this it is only a short step to create the basic form of Ganesha as seen in Figure 4. This representation of the Ganesha icon - the product of Shiva Shakti union and as *Omkaraswarupa*, was later humanised by the artists who obviously took some liberties with the basic form, and added further attributes, giving us now many versions of Ganesha's icons. It will, however, be noted that they all have an elephant head (with large ears, one tusk and a trunk) and a pot belly whatever be the other poses and embellishments and decorations. Surprisingly some of the older sculptures, particularly a few '*Ashtavinayaks*' from Maharashtra bear a close resemblance to this basic figure, thus giving some validity to the above assumptions.

Sri Aurobindo in his *Synthesis of Yoga* has pointed out that the characteristics of the two poles, Shiva and Shakti or Purusha and Prakriti principles are modified depending on the plane - physical, vital, mental or psychic - at which they are considered. Since in our daily life we are more or less dealing with the physical plane, in this discussion it will be more appropriate to consider the two poles as Matter and Spirit.

The basic figure of Sri Ganesha has a deep yogic significance which should be looked into more closely. Figure 4 also represents the icon from this point of view.

The vertical axis joining all the centers contains some important *chakras*. The one at the bottom is *muladhara*, which is all Matter and no Spirit. Obviously it represents the Earth element, the grossest in the hierarchy of the *panchmahabhutas*. Since Sri Ganesha is the ruling deity of this *chakra*, it explains why Parvati created Him using the soil on Her body.

As we proceed upwards, the extent of Spirit slowly increases

making the physical manifestation more subtle. The center of the lower small circle which we next meet corresponds to the *manipura chakra* at the navel which represents *Agni* or Fire or Energy which moves the physical universe.

We next come to the center of the large circle of creation. This is *vishuddhi chakra* representing space or ether - both physical and mental, the first *mahabhuta* created from Nothing and associated with AUM. It has the physical and spiritual in equal proportions. Of far greater importance is that it stands for the *advaitic* or non-dual center from which the whole creation is projected. Since this center is difficult to visualise in the Ganesha icon, it is emphasised with a prominent projection - the single tusk of the Lord stressing non-duality or *advaita*. This must be the reason why this aspect is specially emphasised in the Ganesha Gayatri which is as follows:

OM EKADANTAYA VIDMAHE,
VAKRATUNDAYA DHIMAHİ
TANNO DANTI PRACHODAYAT.

The *vakratunda* mentioned above, i.e. the trunk which starts from this point is curved in nature (*towards left*) and represents the boundary between the Matter and Spirit and incorporates both their properties. It represents the curved spinal cord in the human body which carries the main *nadis* as well as *chakras* or centers of *pranic* energy. The superposition of *Omkara* in the Yin Yang diagram gives rise to large ears. They signify high sensitivity to the divine *nada* or sound. Hence along with this trunk and tusk, the large ears formed by and signifying the sound of AUM explains why the elephant head was chosen by Lord Shiva, which is His spiritual contribution to the form of His dear son.

As we proceed upwards the center of the upper small circle between the eyebrows corresponds to *ajna chakra* or the Third Eye, the seat of the mind, which is basically spiritualised matter. The uppermost point i.e. the *sahasrara*, the seat of *Sadashiva* or Ever Pure is obviously all Spirit and nil Matter.

A deeper contemplation of this mystic figure will certainly yield more spiritual treasures. But even what has been described gives some insight to grasp the greater significance of His mysterious form.

The “Milk Miracle” – A Reassessment

Given here are some salient features of a strange incident that occurred in September 1995. This is included in this book as the incident was related to the icons of Sri Ganesha. This reassessment raises the question: Should such incidents be left unexplored?

THIS is a study of an of the extraordinary event occurred related to Sri Ganesha that shook not only India, but had an impact in several other countries also in September 1995 when it was reported that the icons of Sri Ganesha were consuming the milk offered by the devotees. As thousands of people moved to temples and fed not only of the images of Sri Ganesha but the idols of other Deities also, front page banner headings appeared in newspapers in India along with photographs of people feeding the idols with milk.

It was reported that it began on September 21 when a person in New Delhi dreamt Lord Ganesha asking him for some milk. At dawn he went to the local temple, where the priest reluctantly agreed to his plea to offer the stone idol a teaspoon of milk. Both watched in astonishment as it disappeared magically, consumed by the idol. The news spread in no time and throughout the country people began trying it and to their amazement it worked in temples and homes. The phenomenon persisted for two or three days and stopped as abruptly as it begun. It was reported that many people experienced this phenomenon in several other countries too. When a teaspoon of milk was offered by touching it at Ganesha's trunk, tusk or mouth it disappeared in a few seconds to few minutes. Not always, but with unprecedented frequency it occurred. There was world-wide press coverage and the reporters of several countries were said to have visited the temples to offer and ascertain themselves. The British newspapers gave front page coverage. 'Evening Standard' in a front page headline said: "The Amazing Milk 'Miracle' – Thousands flock to London Hindu temple as statues 'drink'." Reuters news service quoted Anila Premji, one who offered the milk: "I held the spoon

out, and it just disappeared. To me it was just a miracle. It gave me a sense of feeling that there is a God, a sense of Spirit on the Earth."

Many views, comments and articles were published in newspapers. Several psychologists ridiculed this immense popular interest in this incredible phenomenon as due to 'mass hysteria'. On the other hand, many a physical scientist, conceding that it has really happened, explained it as 'capillary action due to surface tension'. Given below is a report and a photograph that appeared in 'The Hindu' dated September 23, 1995, which gives rather a matter of fact account of the phenomenon.

Ganesha idols being being spoon-fed

From Our Staff Reporter

Thiruvananthapuram Sept.22.

Idols of Ganesha were 'spoon-fed' with milk in several houses in the city since last night as scores of curious folk put to test "believe it or not" reports that idols of the deity had "consumed" offerings of milk in different parts of the country.

Inspired by a television clipping last night showing the spectacle unfolding in a temple in north India, 10-year old Priya Sankar tried a hand at feeding the miniature brass idol of Lord Ganesha in her house. Soon the little girl was squealing with delight as the milk offered on a spoon was "mysteriously" drawn up the tinyhole at the tip of Ganesha's trunk. Members of the family watched with bewilderment as the little girl continued to 'spoon-feed' the deity with apparent success.

Such was the rush at the house throughout the day that it was after much thought that the family decided against calling the police and the task of controlling the crowd was taken over by a group of youth.

Members of the family claimed that the vessel containing the milk offerings had been refilled four or five times on Thursday night alone.

And even late into the evening today, the miniature brass idol which is said to have been bought about a year back at Guruvayoor continued to 'oblige' long queues of visitors. What was confounding was that the visible spill over from the feeding was a trifle compared



Children try their hand at 'spoon-feeding' a Ganesha idol in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday.

{Can one find any trace of 'hysteria' on these faces? They reflect critical study, curiosity and calm observation, If litres of milk are absorbed by this tiny icon, it is evidently something other than capillary action. Why not the out-of-the-ordinary be investigated and studied as clues to know the deeper facts of the human mind and the universe, instead of an outright rejection on the basis of the presently known laws of science?}

to the liters of milk reportedly consumed by the idol.

The reactions of witnesses to the event ranged from incredulity to surprise and skepticism while for the more ardent devotees the experience was "an emotional reaffirmation of faith".

Meanwhile, at Sreekandesswaram, groups of people were jostling outside the fencing of the Arissammoodu Maha Ganapathi temple where a barely two inch panchaloha icon of the deity was 'spon-fed' on 'litres and liters of raw milk'.

Milk-stocks at the shop nearby depleted fast as more and more people turned up to verify the miracle first-hand.

Even as reports of similar events in several other households in the city and other parts of the State as well keep on pouring in, the scientific community has been guarded in providing a convincing explanation for the phenomenon, obviously because of religious overtones. However, the scientist Dr. R.V.G. Menon felt that the phenomenon needed physical verification.

Dr. Menon said suction of any liquid could be explained as the capillary effect in case of minute quantities, but certainly not where litres were involved. (Courtesy: *The Hindu*, Sept. 22, 1995)

There is no difficulty for us to accept all that happen normally in the stereotyped manner.. But when something extraordinary occurs, it puzzles us and we often tend to condemn it as irrational. In fact, everything is rational, only some gaps exist, small or big, which we have to fill in through unbiased investigation and inquiry. Carl Jung, the renowned psychologist, had observed that scientists are also human beings and they may tend to reject things that they cannot explain based on the laws they know.

Can we simply dismiss this experience of thousands the world over as 'mass hysteria'? The numerous photographs that appeared in newspapers clearly revealed that those who experienced were not mere illiterate, superstitious and gullible masses, but mostly educated people. Many of them belonged to different walks of life and they have given the accounts of their experience. Aparna Chattopadhyaya of New Delhi in a letter published in 'Hindustan Times' observed: "I am a senior scientist of Indian agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi. I found my offerings of milk in a temple being mysteriously

drunk by the deities." An experience will not become a non-experience if we cannot find a rational explanation to it. If we say that these thousands were in the spell of some hallucination and observed what really did not happen, what prevents us from conceding that whatever all of us experience in this world are nothing but illusion! The sensible method is unbiased investigation to find some deeper facts from such experiences.

And the phenomenon ended abruptly as it had begun. No such new incidents later emerged that was capable of making thousands 'gullible' or 'hysteric'. One can naturally expect that if these people in different walks of life are a class by themselves susceptible to such gullibility, anyone can again easily create such situations swaying them go again 'hysteric' or 'gullible'! It is irrational to assume that without any substance such large number of people in several countries could thus be moved. Again, if this is explained as due to capillary action, these natural law still remains as such and no idols continue to use them to consume litres of milk.

As observed by the scientist mentioned in the 'The Hindu', report, capillary action is applicable only to minute quantities of liquids, not in litres. If metals absorb large quantities of liquid thus, one will not be able to keep milk in a metal vessel, as it will flow out through the sides! Another scientific observation is, that because of the rough surface idols made of stone or earth may absorb the milk. However, litres will not be absorbed. Moreover, since olden days milk is being often kept in earthen vessels with rough surface and it does not ooze out.

One cannot annihilate facts by simply closing one's eyes. Under the influence of unrelenting belief – both in religion and science – what we often miss is unbiased and critical examination. In advancing explanation as 'mass hysteria' 'gullibility' 'capillary action', etc., there is nothing wrong. But when such views are imposed vehemently blocking further thought and investigation they close the doors of knowledge. Blind acceptance and blind ridicule are not going to expand the horizon of knowledge. If a team of scientists with an open mind, the scientists who can accept that what remains to be discovered in the universe is immense, had interviewed people from various walks of life who had experienced the phenomena they

could have at least revealed to the world convincingly certain facts about the phenomenon. Of course, they may have to face the orthodoxy in their own field, but it is courage that is needed for new breakthroughs.

In this context the following observation of Sir Roger Penrose, renowned for his contributions in the field of modern scientific inquiry, made during an interview with Nikhil Padgaokar, published in the 'The Hindu' Magazine (June 11, 2000) is illuminating. While discussing on the nature of human mind and computation, the following question was asked:

"You do not however question the notion that whatever is going in the mind can indeed be explained in terms of physical laws."

"I do not believe that whatever is going on is beyond the scope of science. *However, it does lead me to believe that we have to go beyond existing science.* Science today can only approximately emulate what is going on in the mind, which suggests that there is something else going on out there in our conscious thinking and perception and whatever else is involved in mentality. So we need something other than computation, but I am not saying it stands outside the scope of some future science. *Whatever that future science is – and we can point to the direction it may take – it will have quite a different character from the science of today. What we have today cannot come to terms with what mentality is.*"

Science has not got stuck up anywhere. Nothing is beyond reasoning. But science has to advance filling up the gaps in perceptions and experiences. Investigation of extraordinary facts would help it. A new scientific vision is necessary to herald a greater human life based on deeper knowledge about mind and matter, which would inspire people to enrich one another in a greater civilization of harmony and freedom. The role of India is to facilitate the evolution of this greater humanity.

Like the Zen masters who present quizzes to their disciples to grapple with and grasp the greater facts, Nature also often poses riddles to equip man to break the limitations of the intellect for a deeper understanding of life and Nature. Such a breakthrough would help to evolve a better and more harmonious existence. (According

to the knowledge of the ancient seers, in the background of the phenomenal Nature - *Prakrithi* – there is a subtle and causal field of Nature called *Moola Prakrithi*, imbued with creative Intelligence.) With an unbiased mind if anyone explores Nature one will come across several such riddles that are difficult to solve. We may simply ignore them considering them as ‘hallucination’. Of course, most of us inevitably have to cast off all our world experiences as ‘hallucination’ at the stage of our final quitting. However, if we care to make earnest efforts to solve these quizzes, we may get better insights that would, enable us to live more intelligently with a higher perspective of life and its greater possibilities.

Freudian' Misinterpretation and Denigration of a Profound Divine Theme

"In religion and culture, India is the only millionaire! There is only one India! The land of dreams and romance. The one land all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for the shows of all rest of the globe combined." -Mark Twain

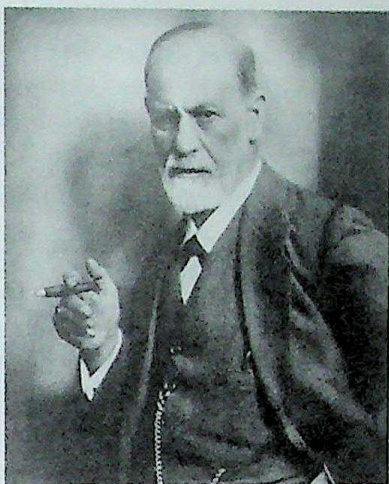
SOME people in the West seem to derive a malicious pleasure from writing books that denigrate India's spiritual heritage, which has ever been one of unbiased inquiry and further evolution of human consciousness. Through one-pointed enquiry the ancient Rishi-s discovered profound truths about man and universe, a knowledge that transcends religions and nationalities. How significant are the words of Rabindranath Tagore: **"I love India not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones."**

The Denigration

Prof. Paul Courtright of Emory University (Atlanta, Georgia, USA) has written a book on Sri Ganesha. In the pretext of subjecting the Puranaic legend of Ganesha's origin to a Freudian interpretation, the writer presents it in a way that any cultured mind will find it nauseatingly obscene. It is ludicrous that a legend with a spiritual message is presented as if it is a historical incident. And it shows to what extent 'academic freedom' can be misused. The legend has been distorted to present in a loathsome and crude fashion without giving any decent consideration to the spiritual principles embodied in the unique form of the Deity and hurting the religious sentiments of millions. Such writers, it seems, think man has nothing else but a physical body and perverse sex!! Even Ganesha's liking for sweets is given a weird sexual interpretation.

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The Freudian analysis, which is considered outdated today, is in no way applicable to the highly spiritual facts. Pointing out the major flaws of the Freudian approach, Freud's one time colleague, Carl Gustav Jung says: "It is not the children of the flesh, but the 'children of God' who know freedom. That is what Freud would never learn and what all those who share his outlook forbid themselves to learn. At least, they never find the key to this knowledge. We moderns are faced with the necessity of rediscovering the life of the Spirit; we must experience it anew ourselves. It is the only way in which we can break the spell that binds us to the cycle of biological events."



Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

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What a wrong key with which the author of the Freudian interpretation is trying to open the treasure chests of Indian philosophy! This interpretation, reflects the author's utter ignorance of the spiritual content of the Puranic stories. The renowned historian Arnold Toynbee observes in his book 'An Historian's Approach to Religion' : "*Pharisaism has been the besetting sin of religions of the Judaic family, and the sin has brought retribution on itself in a tragic series of atrocities and catastrophe. The fruit of Phariasaism is intolerance, the fruit of intolerance is violence; and the wages of sin is death.*"

And contrasting this with the spiritual heritage of India, he says: "*It seems to be a matter of historical fact that, the Judaic*

religions have been more exclusive-minded than the Indian religions have. In a chapter of the world's history in which the adherents of the living higher religions seem likely to enter into much intimate relations with one another than ever before, the spirit of Indian religions, blowing where it listeth, may perhaps help to winnow a traditional Pharisaism out of Muslim, Christian and Jewish hearts."

The Message of Puranic Legends

The ancient sages passed on the spiritual wisdom to generations through the means of profound texts as the Upanishad-s and through the highly symbolic stories of the Puraana-s. While the former was meant for the intellectually oriented, the latter were intended for the common folk. They neglected no section of society. The composers of the Puraana-s had a profound insight into human nature, before which the knowledge of the modern psychologists will fade into insignificance. A serious reader will be marveled at their mastery over the language, minute analysis of human psyche, their wondrous ability to present the opposing points of view with equal ease and justice. They had a purpose – the refinement and evolution of the human psyche and they used analogies and symbolic forms for this purpose. A technique of discriminative imagination is effectively employed to bring the conditioned human psyche in touch with the life expanding spiritual values. Some of the stories, which appear as hyperbolic imagination, have profound inner meaning. While these stories entertain the common people and inculcate higher values in them, they reveal their symbolic wisdom to any earnest inquirer. **And it has been specially mentioned in several Puraana-s that the stories contain hidden meaning that has to be grasped through contemplation.**

Georg Feuserstein has said: **".... nowhere on earth the impulse towards transcendence found more consistent and creative expression than on the Indian peninsula."** The Rishi-s, the bold and unbiased explorers of Truth, were profound scientists who sought the evolutionary expansion of human consciousness. Freudian analysis of their profound wisdom is like trying to contain in a little cup the endless ocean! Freud was humble enough to admit his limitations in his *Autobiography* thus: "Looking back over the

patchwork of my life's labours, I can say that I have made many beginnings and thrown out many suggestions. Something will come of them in future, though I cannot say whether it will be much or little." Freud could reach only up to some fringe aspects of the influence of the sexual factor in human life, while the ancient Rishi-s who searched in depth discovered the highest spiritual meaning of life and of the universe. It is pathetic that this 'Freudian interpretation' is employed to malign the wisdom of the Rishi-s in such an obscene manner, misleading people and hurting their religious sentiments.

There seems to be an obsession among some people with *Shiva-linga*! They derive a thrill in repeatedly and monotonously presenting the worship of Shiva-linga as primitive phallus worship. The word 'Shiva' means the Supreme Auspicious Reality and 'Lingam' means symbol. Shiva-lingam has an elliptical shape and is used as a tangible symbol of formless Reality, which is the source of all forms – the Reality that is formless and potent with infinite forms. According to Indian philosophy the phenomenal universe is manifested through a polarization of Reality as Shiva (creative Divine Consciousness) and Shakthi (creative Divine Energy). Besides being a symbol of the formless Reality potent with infinite forms, Shiva-linga and its base are also used to represent this creative polarity symbolizing them as the male and female generative organs (*linga* and *yonis*). There is nothing vulgar or primitive in representing thus such a universal fact. It is no wonder that minds obsessed with perverted sexual thoughts fail to comprehend any higher spiritual concepts.

Indian philosophy does not condemn erotic love as something obscene and indecent. It takes it as a natural and evanescent joy giving due emphasis to its aesthetic dimensions. When one loses control over it, it turns out to be a debasing obsession, assumes a criminal and unhealthy character and blocks one's access to the higher dimensions of life. As a 'passion for creation', it is not alien to life and not entirely unspiritual. Unlike the Western Puritanism, which feigns to suppress it, but often falls headlong into permissiveness, Indian philosophy and art highlight its aesthetic aspect and exhorts to elevate and sublimate it by often symbolically representing it to extol the intense urge of the limited self to embrace and merge with

the supreme Self. The erotic stance in such great hymns as the *Geetha-Govindam* and the erotic sculptures in the outer walls of some temples serve only to de-condition and elevate the human mind to the sublime heights of beauty, love and devotion. (This aspect is discussed in detail in our publication *Power in Temples: A Modern Perspective*.) Indian philosophy and art aim at refining human emotions from their disturbing and debasing grossness by highlighting their higher possibilities.

The Remarkable Views of an Eminent Intellectual

Contrast this biased and vulgarized tirade against Indian culture with the profound appreciation of an eminent scientist, Professor Alexander Spirkin, a Member of the erstwhile USSR Academy of Sciences, who having no religious affiliation, observes in his book, *Dialectical Materialism* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1983 pp339-340): "The sages of ancient India discovered astonishingly subtle and profound psycho-biophysical connections between the human organism and cosmic and subterranean processes. They knew much that even today is beyond the ken of European scientific thought, or that it ignores, often trying to conceal its helplessness by asserting that oriental wisdom is mere mysticism, and thus showing its inability to distinguish the rational but not yet fully understandable essence from various figments of imagination. It is sometimes difficult for us to penetrate the profound language of symbolic forms in which this wisdom is couched, to get at the essence of that wisdom. A full understanding of these complex problems can be achieved only in the broad context of history and culture. Historical experience offers us some instructive lessons for the present day. If we look around thoughtfully at the path humanity has passed, it is not difficult to see that the minds of the makers of culture have been guided by the desire to achieve an understanding and a rational transformation of the human being himself, his bodily and spiritual organization, the preservation and strengthening of his health. Socio-political, philosophical, religious, moral, aesthetic and all cultural efforts in general have tended towards this goal.

"Various systems of exercises linked with religious beliefs were evolved to change the state of the mind, the consciousness, to

achieve complete unity with the universe, to become one with the energy of nature. These techniques for influencing one's own organism through the mechanisms of psycho-physiological self-regulation and control — techniques that are much in fashion today — could not have survived for centuries and have penetrated other cultures with a different ethnos, if they had not contained some real knowledge of the most subtle and hidden structural energo-informational neuro-psychical and humoral potentials, **which even now sometimes seem fantastic to the analytical European mind, particularly when it is fettered by stereotypes.**

“Oriental culture is full of beliefs about the role of the way of life and its various components — breathing techniques, the ability to commune very subtly with nature, acupuncture, cauterizing, and other ways of influencing the biologically active centers of the organism, herbo-medicine, diagnostics by means of the iris of the eye, pulse and olfactory diagnostics, consideration of the position of the earth in relation to the celestial bodies in medicine, the time of year and day and of the properties of water in relation to the state of the earth strata and the character of its flow in connection with the geo magnetic phenomena — all this and much else has contributed to the great wisdom of the Eastern peoples, the wealth of their culture and man's place therein, their understanding of the mechanisms of regulation of his life activity and vital potentials. Thus already in the distant past, in the mists of mythological world views the precious crystals of knowledge, tested by the experience of centuries, of skills in beneficially influencing man's body gradually accumulated. How could people of those far off times know so much without any experiments or apparatus about the conditions and factors that regulate the course of the vital processes and the character of the interaction between man and nature, particularly the influence of the celestial bodies, the sun and the moon and various radiations proceeding from outer space and the bowels of the earth! And all this was taken into consideration both in diagnosing and in treatment! **Does this not go to show an astonishingly high level of culture that should arouse our admiration, gratitude and desire to study! This knowledge could not have retained its vitality if it had not again and again been confirmed by practice.**”

An Active Spiritual Civilization

India has a creative civilization that draws such respect and desire for study "One cannot conclude the history of India," says Will Durant, "as one can conclude the history of Egypt, or Babylonia, or Assyria; for that history is still being made, that civilization is still creating.:" Arnold Toynbee warned that the major problems created by the West have to find ultimately an Indian solution if mankind has to survive a catastrophic destruction.

The following statement of Pope Paul VI, after his return from his visit to India in 1964 appeared in a report in *Indian News*, Washington D.C. on the 1 January 1965, throws light the universal value inherent in Indian culture:

"This country is not Catholic," Pope Paul said, "but what courtesy, what opening of spirit, what an avid desire to get a glance, or a word, from this strange traveler from Rome!" The Pontiff said: "That was a moment of understanding, of community of mind. We do not know what these rejoicing crowds saw in us, but we saw in the crowds a humanity of great nobility, identified with its millennial cultural traditions. These crowds were not all Christians, but they were profoundly spiritual, and in so many ways so good and winning."

This is the glorious spiritual civilization India has. No dogmatic ideas and disparaging remarks can ever tarnish this broad-based culture of eternal values because it is deeply rooted in Truth.

Since time immemorial Sri Ganesha has been the most popular, venerated and beloved Deity of this land.

Some people have expanded their being to be one with the transcendental Spirit of the universe and thus solved the riddle of life.

They are the great Rishi-s. They compressed knowledge into forms, so as to last for ages and help generations open the doors to last for ages and help generations open the doors to the liberating inner Reality. The forms of Deities – myriad Gods and Goddesses – with many heads and many hands, might have puzzled you. Transcendental vistas, whether perceived by the philosopher or the scientist, exceed the ordinary. And the presentation of these facts calls for extraordinary methods. When you explore the divine forms, you will realize how the Rishi-s employed such forms to reveal the facets of Reality and to bring you in communion with them.

In this book you will explore the significance of the form of Sri Ganesha, an elephant-headed figure with a tiny rat as its mount! And as you proceed, the fragrant petals of knowledge unfold themselves reminding you of the glory of the freedom-giving spiritual energies of evolution in you. This book is the first in our series, Alphabet of Reality.

 **Integral Books**

Anandashram P.O., Kanhangad, Kerala 671 531 India

E-mail: sri@integralbooks.com

Website: www.integralbooks.com

Ph: 91-467-2208886

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

According to Vedanta,
from the primeval Intellegence-
Energy vibration, *Pranavam*,
symbolized by ॐ, evolved the
universe. The latent consciousness in
matter sprang forth and evolved in
the form of living beings finally
reaching the human stage.

The figure of Sri Ganesha
along with his rat mount symbolizes
the theme of the unfoldment
of consciousness.

The Ganesha theme is a sign post
that shows mankind
the way of directing the evolutionary
energy to reinforce and realize
the grater potentials.

The strange form of Ganesha
represents the Divine Power
that prompts consciousness locked in
earth to express its greater
dimensions through living beings and
equips the human being to
transcend the obstacles in the
material and spiritual dimensions till
one evolves to be the
unconditioned Reality.



INTEGRAL BOOKS

"Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind."

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